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11

THE SAINTS OF ERIN.

LEGENDARY
HISTORY OF IRELAND.

BY

L. TACHET DE BARNEVAL,

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY

JOHN GILMARY SHEA.

"IN THE CATHOLIC SENSE, THE LEGEND IS THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS."

BOSTON:
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PREFACE.

THE study of Irish history finds more votaries now; the treasures long locked up in manuscript are now beginning to be presented to the reading public; but a prejudice due to the rationalistic spirit of the last century weighs on the early lives of the Irish saints. Most frequently they are spoken of only with contempt. Moore, in his *History of Ireland*, made a feeble vindication, sheltering his rashness under the names of a Gibbon and a Montesquieu: the writer of the following pages has done more; he has drawn from them pictures full of interest and beauty. He views the whole legend as a Christian artist, not as an antiquarian or an historian. The credibility of accounts does not enter into his sphere; he takes up any that suits the woof of the tapestry which he weaves, and which we trust our readers will find as pleasing as we have done.

In giving it an English dress, the translator has indulged the hope that it may lead to a series of lives of early Irish saints similar to that published a few years since in England, on the English saints. Rashly, perhaps, he is himself engaged on a *Life of St. Patrick*, which he hopes soon to complete, in spite of the difficulty of obtaining here works on the early church history of Ireland.

The numerous miracles in the old Lives caused them to lose favor in the last century ; but, as Barneval remarks, the miracles of the Irish saints are not matters of faith ; we may examine and discuss them. Some may be exaggerations, some inventions of local pride ; but it is a most erroneous idea to suppose them unexampled in more recent times. So far as my reading has gone, there are few miracles in the lives of the Irish saints more extraordinary than those of St. Vincent Ferrier, St. Philip Neri, St. Francis of Hieronymo, Blessed Peter Claver, Blessed Sebastian de la Aparicion, or many others, whose biographies may be found in the series of Lives of Modern Saints.

If our ancestors, prior to the last century, erred by their credulity, those of the last most surely did by their incredulity ; and what picture can be more false than Lives of *thaumaturgi* like St. Patrick and St. Bridget, — and *thaumaturgi* they were by the unanimous voice of history, — when those Lives record not a single miracle ?

The result of this incredulous tone, this sneering at miracles, had been highly detrimental to Catholic piety. We boast of our early saints, we glory in them ; but rarely, most rarely, do we invoke them, or solicit the favors of Heaven through their hands.

With these few remarks on the early Lives from which Barneval drew his pages, we commend his book, as a most graceful and interesting picture of early Christianity in Ireland. His rich, exuberant style, his cultivated imagination, and graceful narrative, give a charm to the pictures which he presents — pictures which will be new to many ; which will soon be, let us hope, familiar to most.

JOHN GILMARY SHEA.

NEW YORK, August 1, 1857.

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TO THE READER.

THESE pages do not deserve a preface, and I am not called upon to rewrite my book here. Moreover, these pages are not properly a book, and I hesitate to offer them to the public. It is neither literature nor history, neither erudition nor philosophy ; it is simply the reading of an ignorant and curious student ; it is, if you will, an abridgment of the Irish legend.

Of late, the word *legend* has come in vogue, and is used for every thing. In the Catholic sense, the legend is the Lives of the Saints. The story of Roland and Arthur is no more a legend than that of Ædipus, Achilles, or Æneas. Our subject then is the saints of Ireland.

The lives of the saints have long been favorite reading. For fifteen centuries it was Christian and popular ; it took the place of the Bible ; it dispensed with theology and sermons ; children, women, men, sought in the practices of the saints the ideal of good and the lesson of duty. In our days it has become pro-

fane and learned ; it forms a complement to annals and chronicles, and historians find in it materials to restore the past, with its monuments and personages.

But books — some books especially — resemble those paintings which may be regarded under different aspects, and which, in each point of view, show different objects. In these edifying and instructive histories there is something besides morals and history.

The monks who wrote them sought to edify and to instruct. Had they no other object? One thing is certain ; the miraculous, the romantic, the poetic, enter largely into their narrative. Faith and imagination, moreover, scarcely go without each other : the imagination relies on faith, and faith solicits the imagination.

This poetic, marvellous, and half-literary element rendered these narratives popular. In the seventeenth century, when reason became severe, when, even in the bosom of Catholicity, the worship of reason was inaugurated, men attacked *the Legend*. The Bollandists soon criticised it, and the Benedictines expurgated it. It scandalized the incredulous a little less, perhaps ; perhaps, too, it edified the faithful less. What the learned ridicule or proscribe, what the erudite neglect or despise, what even *litterateurs* disdain, is precisely what I have sought in preference.

I shall not speak of the charm which I have found in the company of the saints, the graces which I have found in the virgins of Ireland. The public is so used to

this kind of confidence, that it guesses it in a moment. There is almost always an intercourse, shorter or longer, between an author and his personages—a connection more or less intimate, a sympathy more or less impassioned; and the book is very often only the unstudied avowal, the indiscreet revelation, of this attachment. In this affection there is at times much illusion, and to betray the attachment is not to inspire others with it. Each reader has his predilections, and it is idle to expect him to embrace all that is proposed or relish all that is offered.

The personages whom we are about to see do not doubt as to their slight chance of success; they dare not hope to succeed in the world on which they venture. They are, take it all in all, beings of another world, and their ordinary place is in martyrologies and the margin of missals. They doubtless desire to be agreeable, but they cannot dispense with being edifying; they are above all saints, and many bear an austere countenance. Nevertheless, let us add, that their history may give, besides a poetic charm and a religious attractiveness, another interest still; they mingle in grave events; their lives are complicated with serious questions. The miraculous account sometimes conceals an historic sense; instructive and curious facts are recognized under the legendary form, and it is always easy to separate them from the symbol.

In the abridgment of the Irish legend, two short

chapters recall some ancient traditions to prelude it. The legend itself is divided into three principal parts : the conversion of Ireland, the life of the Irish church at home, its history abroad. The last two chapters are only an observation, a question suggested by the perusal of the legend.

I have stopped at the time of the crusades. Except a few rare extracts from the compilation of John of Tynemouth, in the fourteenth century, but which bear an air of originality and antiquity, I have employed in the text of the legend only those who, according to the greatest authorities,—the Bollandists, Mabillon, and the Benedictines, Colgan, Usher, Messingham, Ware, &c.,—are certainly or probably anterior to that epoch. Up to this moment, then, I have followed the legend.

In these narratives the legend and history often vary sadly ; at other times they approach ; frequently they are confounded. The reader will doubtless be able to distinguish and recognize each ; it is enough for me to awaken his attention, and at the same time, in the name of these old biographers, to appeal to his good will.

A single word, now, in favor of the author. I have given time and pains to this task ; I have traversed huge works, and read many a long volume ; I have seen much science, and encountered men of vast erudition ; but my writing will not show it. I must then, at least, protest that I have no more pretension to science than the obscurest monk, whose secretary I undertake to be.

Should the volume fall into the hands of the learned, I humbly beg them to excuse my faults.

A monk of Bobbio said, "I write through obedience, and for fear of being beaten." Few authors have so good an excuse. Yet they may deserve indulgence if they sincerely avow their incompetence; they will then obtain pardon for their sincerity, nay, for their very incompetence.

I might allege also the personal interest that has led me to the study. "One of the reasons that induce me to write," says Stanihurst to Plunkett, in addressing his work on Ireland to him, "is, that I have the honor of belonging to the Barnwells, whose career in Irish history has always been so honorable; and for the same reason you will doubtless welcome my book, for you too belong to their family." But this consideration, which holds as good for me as for Stanihurst and Plunkett, may be a matter of indifference to the public. That a family should be exiled from Ireland for its Catholic faith, and fidelity to the sovereign, and that there remains in its descendants, after the lapse of two centuries, love of Ireland in their soul, and in their veins something of Irish blood and instinct, is perfectly natural. To enter into these family feelings and sympathies of origin, it is not enough to understand them. My readers must become, as they read, Irish in imagination and heart. This, talent alone in the author can effect, and I do not pretend to have succeeded.

But the traditions of the Irish legend have, it seems to me, an interest and a charm in themselves which cannot entirely disappear in the clumsiest hand. There will remain enough, I hope, in my narrative, to make the work and its author find favor in the eyes of the public.

LEGENDARY HISTORY OF IRELAND.

CHAPTER I.

GREEK AND ROMAN TRADITIONS AS TO IRELAND.

THE Romans met the Scots in Britain. Long before they had planted stable colonies in the northern cantons, the warriors of the great isle of the west, crossing the sea in their hide-bound osier barks, had constantly ravaged the British provinces, and more than once the legions had to drive them from the province which they came to protect.* Agricola even seems to have thought, for a moment, of crossing the Irish Sea; and his troops deployed along the shore in a menacing attitude. But Agricola was recalled. The Romans remained on the defensive; the Scots of Erin, in spite of bloody lessons, returned more than once. When they met the legions, *Ierne* indeed "mourned her piles of children slain;"† but the Roman foot never pressed the green soil of the sacred isle.

The Romans, then, never saw Ireland; nor did the Greeks know it better. The merchants who had traded

* Tacitus, *Agricola*, 24.

† Claudian, *De IV. Cons. Honorii*.

in these parts, the lieutenants or prætors who had commanded in the vicinity, doubtless carried back more accurate notions ; but on reading most authors, it would seem that Ulysses and Homer alone had known these distant regions. Hear Avienus ! " The Sea of the *Æstrymnides* is a strange sea, with shallow waters, thick and heavy waves, through which sea monsters crawl ; not a breath there fills the sail of the ship imprisoned in the tall sea plants."* It is the extremity of the world and the Sea of the Cimmerians.

Demetrius relates that this sea is studded with countless desert islands, devoted to the divinity and heroes.† He wished to visit one. Scarcely had he touched the shore when the air was troubled ; the winds, the tempest, broke loose with fearful prodigies ; globes of fires traversed earth and air. They were, he was told, signs which announced the death of a being superior to humanity. Not far off, on another isle, adds Demetrius, Saturn was held captive in the custody of Briareus. Was it not in Caledonia, say some, was it not in Ireland, say others, that Ulysses evoked the shades ? Was not this attested by an inscription engraven on the rocks ? ‡

So when, in the fifth century, Alecto, for the last time, perhaps, left the shades of Tenarus,§ it was there that the subterranean way opened that brought her to the light.

Seven hundred years after, when a Greek, a grammarian of Constantinople, turned his eyes to the misty horizon of the north-west, he seemed still to see the bark of Ulysses, and the shady realm of the dead.

* *Ora maritima*, 120.

† *Plutarch*, *Orac.*

‡ *Solinus*, c. 25.

§ *Claud. in Ruf. i.* 123.

"Thither," he says, "go the souls of the dead. Opposite Britain, the shores of the ocean are inhabited by a nation of fishermen subject to the Franks. They pay no tribute, but they transport the souls of the dead. While asleep in their houses at night, they hear a noise at the door; a voice calls them to work. They arise, go to the shore, ignorant what power they obey; they find barks prepared, but not their own. They set out; no one is with them, yet the bark is heavy. They reached the Isle of Britain; in an instant a long day's voyage is made. They see no one disembark, but they hear voices; the invisible passengers are welcomed, called by name, addressed as father, mother, or called from their trade. Then the fishermen return, and on their homeward way their lightened barks fly still more rapidly."*

Yet Ireland lost little on being left enveloped in the fantastic clouds of Homeric poesy. If then, as now,† she shone like an emerald amid the ocean,—if her dense forests and rich fields, in default of birds and bees, fed countless herds of fattened kine,—her people were fierce, rude, and savage. "They are a harsh race," says Solinus; "they drink the blood of the conquered; they stain their faces with it. When a male child comes into the world, it is on the point of a sword that the mother offers it its first food; and the first hope of a mother's heart, the first prayer of a mother's lips, is, that her child may die in battle, amid the clash of arms. No virtue, no moral law, exists; justice and injustice are not distinguishable."

Yet Solinus does not say all; for Pomponius Mela,

* Tzetzes, *Chiliad*, viii. 218.

† Solinus, 25.

Strabo, St. Jerome, believed them cannibals. But Solinus may have been misinformed ; and the idea formed of the Scots does not correspond with what the Irish relate of their ancestors. If we are to believe their most authentic historians,* the Scoto-Milesians were barbarous only to their enemies, and the interior of the island would have presented to a peaceful and thoughtful traveller the spectacle of a regular, enlightened, powerful, happy, warlike, and hospitable society.

Yet it is not our task to give either the satire or the apology of ancient Ireland, nor its history. We are not to reproduce or correct, with Keating, the story of the bards and the annals of the assemblies of Teamor. We will listen to the monastic biographers or chroniclers ; we wish to know what they relate ; we will listen to them, for the traditions and testimony of antiquity have been but a preamble to their story.

* McGeoghegan, *History of Ireland*.

CHAPTER II.

IRISH TRADITIONS BEFORE CHRISTIANITY.

PATRICK,* one day, in the country of Dicfil, came to a tomb of wonderful width and prodigious length. His disciples and all who followed him stopped; the tomb was measured; it was thirty feet long. "Must we believe," they asked, "that there were ever men so large?" "If you choose," replied Patrick, "we shall see." And as they expressed a great desire, the apostle struck with his staff the head of the tomb, traced the sign of the cross, and the sepulchre opened. And the man who slept there, arising in his gigantic stature, exclaimed to Patrick, "I thank thee, good and holy man, for thou hast for a moment suspended my evils and my sorrows." At the same time he shed bitter tears. "May I not go with you?" said he. "No," said the saint; "thy aspect would strike too great terror in man. Rather, believe in the God of heaven, receive the baptism of the Lord, and return to thy grave." Patrick pronounced the sacred words of the Pater and the Creed; the man repeated them after him; in the name of the Trinity he was thrice plunged into a deep water; and then, with a soul full of joy, he lay down in his tomb, and reposed in peace.

Such were the first inhabitants of Ireland and the neighboring countries; for we find them too in Ar-

* *Elvod. Probus, Vita Patricii.*

morica ; and the country of Memthor, where St. Patrick was born, had once been inhabited by them.* Whence came they ? What mighty ships had borne them to these lands ? Had they marched in the sea like the giant of Sicily ? Did they spring from the earth like the race whose history the ancient Greeks relate ? Or were they, perchance, an antediluvian relic, a tribe that escaped the deluge. We might think so ; for the sons of Noe, the hardy and rapid voyagers, hastened in vain ; they came after them. A struggle ensued ; but the new race of Japhet ever triumphed. Such was the result in Ireland. Only one of the giants escaped,† according to some accounts ; he was to await the coming of St. Patrick, and receive baptism from him. He it was, who, sole faithful witness of ancient deeds and past generations, taught the holy apostle the whole history of ancient Ireland.

The Irish soil seemed, moreover, to repulse the human race.‡ Thrice, so to say, it devoured its inhabitants ; § three emigrations perished there ; and the last comers, the Heberians, who were to remain as masters, well nigh disappeared.

A year had passed since the Heberians landed on the shores of the island, to which they had given a name destined to recall their Iberian fatherland ; when, lo, they behold something like a tower rising amidst the sea ; it was transparent as crystal, and on its battlements armed warriors kept the watch. The Heberians addressed them ; but the strangers, motionless, answered not. The Heberians at once launched their barks, and

* Elvod. Probus, Vita Patricii.

† Giraldus Cambrensis, Topog. Hiberniæ.

‡ Nennius, § 13.

§ Giraldus Cambrensis.

assailed the enemy in his fortress. It crumbled on them, and the sea engulfed them. Thirty vessels had borne them from Heberia ; all, men and women, had rushed on the vessels to meet the enemy ; one had happily been driven on the shore, and its crew, left on land, survived the disaster which they had witnessed.*

We find elsewhere that Ireland was not defended by giants merely ; another race, another power, was established there — the magical power, the race of enchanters. The giants annihilated, magic remained ; it persisted under various names and various forms, and we find it throughout the history of Christian Ireland.

Early, doubtless, and as soon as the Irish had allowed their primitive knowledge of the true God to be obscured, magic contracted its ordinary union with the false-religion. And had not, too, their ancestors inhabited Egypt, that great school of occult science and symbolical idolatry ? The country was filled at the same time with idols and prodigies.

At Magh-Sleacht,† Crom-Cruach was adored ; at Visneach and at Tlachtgha twice a year the sacred fire was kindled in honor of Baal. St. Patrick found King Laogaire adoring Kean-Croithi,‡ the chief of the gods. At Clogher, an inspired stone gave forth oracles, and had been overlaid with gold by a grateful people. The Lia Fail, or stone of destiny, figured in the consecration of kings, and emitted prophetic sounds when it served as their throne on the day of the coronation.

There was a fountain § in Momonia (Munster) which no hand could touch, no eye could see, without Heaven's

* Nennius.

† Ware, *De Hiberni Antiquit.* (Annals, 4 Mag. A. M. 3656.)

‡ Jocelyn, *Vita Patricii*, cap. 56.

§ Geraldus Cambrensis.

pouring down on the whole province torrents that would overwhelm it. Elsewhere a fantastic island alarmed the neighboring countries by its sudden appearance and disappearance ; to render it stationary, red hot arrows had to be hurled into its bosom ; for an old man had taught that fire is the enemy of enchantment, and destroys the work of magic.

Such were the powers that manifested themselves in Ireland, and the mysteries into which the Druids initiated their pupils. It was thus that Lugaimail struggled for three days with prodigies, against St. Patrick ; * that Caplis and Caplid for three days prevented the sun from shining on Irish earth ; how Broichan let loose the winds and aroused the waves to stop the apostle of the Picts.†

Such was pagan Ireland. But we must say that the authors whom we follow have given us very incomplete ideas as to this subject. This perhaps is due to two causes.

In the first place, Christianity introduced a new language and a new alphabet. If the Latin did not consign the Gaelic to oblivion, if Roman letters did not prevent the use of a more or less national alphabet, it caused its neglect, and in all probability proscribed the sacred druidical writing, the ogham, with its simple, abrupt, and bristling lines, by which, in the remotest times, the Druids and bards had preserved and transmitted some of the knowledge of which they were the guardians. Long after were they doubtless read, long employed ; and the parchment read‡ by Ware, had not, we are to believe, been written before the Christian

* *Elv. Probus. Joeslyn, Vita Patricii.* † *Adamnan, Vita Columbkil.*

‡ *De Hibern. Antiquitat.* p. 11.

epoch. But the ogham was at last to disappear, and at the same time, and with it, were in a great measure effaced the reminiscences of Irish antiquity.

Again, — and this is more important, — Christianity brought to Ireland the germ of new ideas, new traditions, new legends. They mingled with * or replaced the old. This operation of superposition, or amalgam, may be observed in the question of origin, and be easily followed. The work of Nennius went through the hands of three authors, each contributing his own part; the national tradition, the Roman tradition, and the biblical tradition, are frequently confronted, and the falsifier is so simple, the falsification so *naïve*, that nothing is more easy than to separate the three texts, and distinguish the three histories. But it is not so always, and in the poetic and legendary part it is sometimes difficult to discern with certainty pagan antiquity and mediæval Christianity, the marvels of the magicians, and the marvels of the monks.

* The incident which opens the chapter is an example.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIANITY IN IRELAND BEFORE ST. PATRICK.

CONARE THE GREAT * still held the monarchy of Ireland ; he was closing a long and happy reign ; peace and abundance had been universal ; there, too, it was the Augustan age ; peace had extended to the remotest countries of the world for the coming of the Messias. Christ, in fact, was born, living, and dying then in a corner of Judea.

Ireland soon learned the wonders of his mission, and the mournful scenes of Calvary, which one of her children had witnessed. This was Conall Kearnach, a famous athlete. Long had he rambled over the world, every where trying his strength, and every where triumphing ; he at last arrived in Palestine, and was at Jerusalem at the moment of the passion. On his return, he related to the King of Ultonia † what he had learned, what he had seen of that monstrous sacrifice, where the innocent victim had been slain like a lamb. At this story, King Conchobar groaned, shuddered, and waxed wroth ; then his anger burst forth ; he cried vengeance against the impious murderers ; had he been there, that ungrateful nation should have deeply rued their cruel ingratitude ! And as his imagination became more inflamed against the butchers, he drew his sword and rushed

* McGeoghegan, ch. vi.

† Ulster.

on the trees and bushes around him, cutting and slashing in fury, swearing that so would he have treated the murderers, the assassins, whose guilty hands had been raised against his Prince and his Lord.

Prophecies, moreover, had announced this great event. Why should not Bacrach, the Druid, have revealed the coming of Christ, when, four centuries later, others foretold the coming of Patrick, and the effects of his preaching.

Ireland had then already received the first germ of Christianity ; and if we are to believe not only popular legends, but certain ecclesiastical traditions, it was soon visited by apostles, as eloquent, doubtless, and surely better instructed than the athlete of Ultonia.

It seems even, on comparing the testimony, that the first missionaries of Christ strove for the honor of evangelizing these unknown and distant isles, and that each hastened there, fearing that they should be overlooked. Aristobulus, brother of St. Barnaby, Simeon Zelotes, James, the son of Zebedee, with Salome, his mother, Timothy, the beloved disciple of St. Paul, Simeon the Cananæan, appeared in the British Isles, and some of them died there. We must not count Joseph of Arimathea, if it be true, as Usher thinks, that he came only with William the Conqueror. But St. Paul himself, St. Peter too, as if to lay with their own hands the limits of Christendom, came, converted many tribes, built churches, ordained priests and bishops. It is surely needless to adduce authorities for all this.

The divine seed fell on a generous soil. The harvest did not delay ; and if not abundant at first, it showed at least what might be expected in no distant future. When we might ask whether Ireland had yet heard the name

of Christ, she had already sent afar her martyrs, her doctors, her bishops. These were the first fruits of her church; and when, in the twelfth century, an Anglo-Norman priest asked the Irish clergy where their martyrs and confessors were, the Bishop of Cashel, in order to answer him, had but to open the first pages of the Martyrology.

Thus, in the first century, Mansuetus founded the episcopal see of Toul, and Beatus evangelized the Swiss.

Thus, in the second century, Cataldus went forth to teach in Italy, and became bishop of Tarentum, while at the same time his brother became bishop of Lupi.

Thus, in the third century, Mello inaugurates by his episcopate the history of the church of Rouen.

Thus, in the fourth century, Eucharius left his native isle, with his family and thirty-three disciples, and became bishop of Toul; and Eucharius, Eliphius, his brother, Monna, Libaria, and Susanna, his sisters, successively suffered martyrdom.*

At Tarentum, Cataldus left deep traces in the memory of the people.† A statue of the size of life was made of solid silver, bearing the crosier and mitre, and enclosing in the head the skull of the holy prelate. Lessons of his life found place in the Roman office; his life was read in choir. In 1492, amid the great events which raised up a Savonarola, and kept Italy in expectation, the Tarentines remembered the Irish prelate; a prophecy was discovered, engraved on leaden plates, predicting the misfortunes and death of King Ferdinand of Arragon; it was placed before the eyes of the prince, and he expired suddenly. The history of St. Cataldus

* Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*, 16 Oct.

† Usher, *Antiq. Ecclesie Britannie*, 751.

was taken up again in the seventeenth century, recounted in prose, chanted in verse in a work composed and entitled, like an epic, the *Cataldiade*.

Where were these new pastors formed? In the very heart of Ireland. Cataldus had studied at Lismore; ere long he taught there, and with such renown, that men flocked from all the neighboring countries to hear him—Gauls and Angles, Scots and Teutons. Thus spoke the Roman office: the biographer had forgotten that in the second century, nations named by him scarcely thought of seeking lessons in Christian science.

Be that as it may, the church of Ireland was illustrated in the next century by an authentic and incontestable renown; Sedulius, whose doctrine was revered almost as much as that of the holy fathers, and whose hymns Christendom still chants. Another school, as learned as that of Lismore, rose in the isle of Beg-Erin; there St. Ibar taught sacred and profane learning, and crowds of Irishmen and foreigners, monks, and others, came to hear his words. On the other side, men were accustomed to turn their steps to Italy, in order to draw at Rome from the very fountains of doctrine. There Colman and Fintan studied; there Kieran spent fifteen years; there Ailbeus had as his master the great St. Hilary; Declan, after exhausting the lessons of Dymma, his master, in Ireland, and teaching there himself, came to Rome to pursue long and laborious studies. Already had Ireland a kind of school at Rome—a sort of studious, holy colony, incessantly renewed; when Declan set out with his companions, Patrick arrived with his.

The popes had already fixed their eyes on that people, so apparently thirsting for virtue and truth. A Roman

priest, on arriving in Ireland, had found Ailbeus, still young, (he was seven years old,) outside of his father's house, kneeling with upturned eyes, and ardently praying that the Creator of heaven and earth might be revealed to him. He was the image of Ireland, awaiting the word that was to enlighten its darkness.

Yet Palladius failed. Others, perhaps, had failed before him. Ireland awaited its deliverer, and that deliverer had not yet appeared. This national Messiah of Ireland is St. Patrick.

CHAPTER IV.

ST. PATRICK.

WHEN the year 432 arrived, the magicians were troubled ; the spirit whom they served, and who inspired them, felt that the hour was at hand, and that his conqueror approached.

At that time, says Probus,* there was in those countries a powerful and cruel pagan king, who reigned over a barbarous people. His name was Laogaire, the son of Neill, and he dwelt in the city of Temora.† Around him dwelt magicians, enchanters, workers of every kind of witchcraft, who knew and foretold the future. The most famous were Egli, Mel, and Locri. Now, the magicians announced frequently to the king and to the princes, that a strange prophet would come from abroad, and beyond the sea, with a new doctrine, unknown, ungraceful, and hard. Few desired his coming, but many would receive him ; all would pay him reverence. He was to overthrow the kingdom, striking with death the kings who resisted him, and seduce the mass of the people ; he was to banish science, and establish an eternal kingdom. And they wrote verses which all the people chanted : "The chief of doctrine shall come, with his curved staff ; and every family shall be struck in the head. At his table he will pronounce magic words, and

* Vita Patricii. Vita Patricii, anct. Patricio, Jun.

† Tara.

from the vestibule of his house all his disciples shall answer, 'So be it, so be it.'"

In fact, in the year 432, Patrick crossed the sea, and landed on Irish earth at the mouth of the Dee, near Crioch-Cuallan; according to others at Innisbherde.

Patrick was a Briton.* His father, Calpurnius, a deacon, son of the priest Potitus, had espoused Conchessa, and dwelt at Bannave, in the country of Nentry, on the confines of Britain and Albania.† Conchessa was a sister of St. Martin, of Tours; she had been carried off with her sister, and both had married, and lived one at Bannave, the other at Empthor.

The stone which received the predestined child at his birth was long venerated; it shed tears when it heard a false oath. At its right was a fountain in the form of a cross, whose waters possessed a marvellous limpidity for the eyes, a delicious sweetness for the lips. His first years,‡ like those of Jesus in the Gospel of the childhood, were spent amid familiar prodigies; he played with miracles; he seemed to try his strength, and the divine power, with a maternal complaisance, reduced itself to his age and stature.

But trials soon began, and were long and painful. Thrice was he dragged into captivity,§ in the islands and on the continent; before his eyes his country fell a prey to fire and sword; Calpurnius and Conchessa were slain; Ructhi, his brother, Mila, his sister, were hurried away into bondage. He was conducted at last to Gaul, was ransomed by Christians, and found St. Martin, of Tours; his trials were accomplished. Laborious study

* Hymn Fiech. Probus, Vita Patricii.

† Vita Patricii, auctore Patricio, Juniore.

‡ Jocelyn, Vita Patricii.

§ Probus.

began.* It was the epoch of St. Martin's death ; Patrick visited Italy and the islands, and returned to Gaul to put himself under the discipline of St. Germanus, of Auxerre, who was his master for eighteen years according to some, forty years according to others ; then he returned to Rome ; and it was at this time that Pope Celestine sent him to Ireland, replacing his name of Succat by the glorious epithet of Patrick.

Thither had God insensibly conducted him, ever leading him by the hand. At first an angel had been attached to his steps, appointed to console him in his trials, and deliver him when they reached their term. "Every day (he was then a slave in Ireland) I took out my flocks to pasture, and during the day I prayed frequently ; † I was more and more inflamed with divine love ; my faith was strengthened, my mind exalted ; my prayers exceeded a hundred in the day, and were almost as numerous at night. I even dwelt in mountains and forests, and I arose before day to pray in rain, cold, and snow, and I did not feel it ; and there was no slothfulness in me as there is now, because then the spirit burned within me. One day in my sleep I heard a voice saying to me, 'Thou dost well to fast, for thou shalt soon return to thy native land.' And a little after the voice said to me, 'Behold, thy ship is ready.' It was not in this neighborhood, but two hundred miles off, and I had never been in that place, and knew no one."

When he fell a second time into bondage, the voice said to him, "Thou shalt be two months with these men." And so it came to pass : on the sixtieth night he was taken out of their hands.

* St. Fiech.

† St. Patrick, *Confessio*. c. vi.

On two different occasions God had revealed to him his mission. When he returned from his first captivity, which had kept him six years in Ireland, his parents besought him not to leave them. "And then I saw, in a vision by night, a man coming from Hiberio (Ireland) having countless letters. He gave me one; I read it, and it began, *The voice of the Irish*. And while I read, I seemed to hear the voice of those who were in the wood of Foclut, near the western sea; and they all, as with one voice, cried out, 'We beseech thee, O saint, come and walk still in our midst.' Then my heart was troubled; I could read no longer, and I awoke."

Repairing to Rome,* he was stopped on an island. God called him to the summit of Mount Hermon, seated him at his right, and showed him the people that was to be his people.

His mission was consecrated by Heaven, sanctioned by Rome; he set out, passed once more through Gaul,† where St. Germanus gave him sacerdotal vestments, sacred vessels, and books; he at last embarked for Ireland, with twenty companions. But his science, his strength, his riches, were not in his Gallic presents, nor in his companions, nor in his books; they were especially in his curved staff that he bore in his hand, and which had borne up the divine steps of Jesus Christ.

The moment had come for Ireland; it would even seem that it was behindhand. It was a shame to Rome not to have done more for the noble country which had received so little and given so much. It was sad for Christianity that a province where she had once set foot was not wholly hers, was still disputed, or rather, still

* Frobus.

† Usher, *Eccles. Britan. Antiq.* p. 842.

held by the paganism of the Druids and Fileas. Nor was Ireland alone concerned, nor was Ireland alone to be converted.

Christianity had subdued the whole empire, and had every where the same frontiers, except on the east, where it had even passed the limits of the empire. But the invasions came, and it was not for Christianity to recoil with the state. Nor did it. But in this meeting, this strife of two great seas, a kind of barrier was formed, the Rhine and Danube marking in Europe the extreme limit of barbarism; and Christianity, in spite of its immense expansive force, might be powerless to cross it. It was necessary, then, to establish it without the empire, without the barbarism which assailed it, that from this position, taking the pagan world—so to speak—in the rear, it might enter straight to the very heart of northern paganism. On certain points this northern paganism had become the invader and the conqueror; in Britain, Christianity, forgetting its universal and heavenly character, had become national, and was perishing with British nationality. There, then, Christian Rome had lost a province which was to be rescued.

Again, Rome and its former provinces, harassed, rent, exhausted, needed men for this powerful diversion, for this sublime and stubborn war, which would perhaps swallow up missionaries by legions. A young and ardent nation was needed, which, once gained to the Christian cause, would be ready to move in a body, to bear to all nations, to every solitude, the spirit, the faith, the enthusiasm, the asceticism, the sanctity, of its new religion.

Ireland seemed to unite all these conditions; it was to satisfy all these wants.

Patrick arrived, clad with all the arms of the Christian propaganda—ineffable sweetness mingled with ravishing grace, inflexible and impetuous zeal, supernatural power.

This power was every where manifested * in the severity of the apostle, as in his benefits ; in his presence nature was agitated and seemed affected. The magicians soon heard strange things ; at the approach of Patrick the isle was filled with prodigies. On his arrival, Dichu raised against him that arm whose might was renowned in Ireland ; his arm was arrested by an invisible power, and withered. The sailors who had brought him related that they had refused to take a leper on board, and that the leper, by Patrick's order, had crossed the sea on a rock which floated beside their vessel.

Yet the magicians accepted the combat,* and were supported by several princes. " Lo, one of us is sick ! " said Macfil to him ; " come and chant over him some of thy magic chants, to see whether thou wilt heal him." Prestiges were tried against miracles ; but Lugaic-Mail was overcome as the Egyptian priests were by Moses. The defeat was often terrible and mortal : five Druids or more perished there. The princes were equally stricken. Recraid came to him with his magicians, having magic signs written under his white robes ; he fell dead. Kertié had despised the admonitions of the saint, and persecuted Christianity ; one day he ordered a bard to sing ; when, lo, the inspired mouth declares that his reign is about to end ; and as the attendant nobles cried out and rose in wrath, at that very instant

* Probuz.

a terrible power was manifested ; the prince and the man became a shameful and miserable beast. On that savage earth, so long inured to drink human blood, amid clans ever in battle, amid warriors who never laid aside their battle axe, the mission itself resembled a merciless combat. Leogaire perished with all his suite, and that suite was numerous.* In another place, forty-nine men slay each other ; in another, Lonan, with his servants, is swept off by death, or the people of Teamrach disappear almost entirely in the gaping earth.

But this powerful hand, sometimes raised to smite, was more frequently raised to resuscitate and bless ; or else, when it gave death, it was because death was sweeter than life. Rius found it hard to believe ; to convince him, Patrick restored him his youth,† and then gave him his choice between this renewed youth and the goods of eternity. Rius preferred to die. At the fountain of Debach, near Cruachan, Patrick, accompanied by his bishops, met the two daughters of King Leogaire,‡ Aethne, the fair, and Fethle, the blooming. They heard the word, and believed. He baptized them and attired them in robes of dazzling white. "Show us now," they said, "the face of Christ, our spouse." Patrick answered, "Unless you taste the body and the blood of Christ, and die in the body, you shall not see Christ in his glory." They said, "Offer then the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, that we may be delivered from the corruption of the flesh, and behold our betrothed in heaven." Then Patrick celebrated the sacrifice. Leogaire's daughters received with great hope and perfect faith, and slept in the peace of death.

* Probus, Benignus, Jocelyn, Vitæ Patricii.

† Jocelyn.

‡ Elv. Probus, Jocelyn, ch. 68.

Even kings opened their hearts to these penetrating graces, to these mystic felicities ; but Patrick was not prodigal of them ; he could also give others. He one day asked King Connall whether he wished to assume the monastic habit. The king replied that his soul was ready for whatsoever he should command ; but St. Patrick, satisfied with his devotion and obedience, told him, "Thou shalt bear the staff and the buckler, as a sign of monastic sanctity and royal authority ; thou shalt have the name and exterior of a layman ; but thy merits and thy heart shall be those of a monk." And tracing on the buckler the sign of the cross, with the staff of Jesus, Patrick promised that his descendants should be invincible whenever they bore that buckler to battle. Now, the history of Ireland and popular ballads testify whether Patrick kept his promise faithfully.

The monarchs were gained or humbled ; magic was overthrown ; the Druids and Fileas, the priests and the poets, Macfil, Pheg, Dubtach, were Christians, missionaries, bishops. The evil ones themselves gave the last battle, and lost it ; the sound of Patrick's bell echoed through their substance like the blast of heaven's trumpets ; in its utmost effort it broke ; but the infernal army was routed, and the last sounds pursued it beyond the borders of Ireland, thenceforward closed to it forever.

Then the work went rapidly on ; Patrick pursued it with ardor. He went around preaching and baptizing, founding churches, ordaining pastors, pursuing the rebellious to the bosom of the wildwood, to the very depths of the moorland. He had sought Milcho and his daughters, whom he had served during four years of his captivity in Ireland. The two young maidens

heard him; but the unhappy magician would have blushed with shame to humble himself to his slave, and preferred to burn up wretchedly in his house.* Another fled from his exhortations, and Patrick sought him in the woods; night came on; but around Patrick the night shone with a supernatural light, and the very darkness was radiant. It was as a visible manifestation of the intellectual light that was in him, and with which he enlightened the minds of the Irish.

His voice was untiring; and for him God suppressed nights and days; he spoke for three days and three nights;† and the sun did not set for those who heard him, and it seemed to them but an hour. For him the Almighty constantly manifested his power. Angels came to lay the veil on the brow of the virgins whom he consecrated. At other times, the future sanctity and greatness of the child that he baptized were revealed to him; then he blessed it, lifting it up in his arms, or seating it beside him in his chariot, the better to watch over the hope of Erin. Heaven itself opened to him, and angelic concerts, rays of eternal glory, emanations of supreme felicity, descended to console him, refresh him, and renew his strength.

After thirty years' toil, all Ireland was conquered. He solemnly took possession in the name of the gospel, and organized it; the earth, the men, the animals, the fruits were decimated: this tithe was for the church; the men and women who composed the human tithe became nuns, priests, or monks. Ireland was covered with holy abodes.

In thirty years he had founded three hundred and six-

* Patricius Junior, Vita St. Patricki.

† Vita Brigid.

ty-five churches,* consecrated three hundred and sixty-five bishops, ordained three thousand priests; in one single day, in Connaught, he had baptized seven kings and twelve thousand of the people.

Then it was that he ascended the heights of Mount Cruachan-Eli,† to contemplate, bless, and crown his work. When he reached the summit of Eli, from every horizon, clouds of birds of every kind and every hue were gathered together; their countless multitude covered the heavens: it was the souls that owed their salvation to him. He blessed them, blessed that land of Erin so dear to him, and begged of the Almighty three favors for it: that every man born upon it, who should at his last moment make before God the avowal of his faults, should be pardoned; that no foe should ever subject it to an irrevocable bondage; that no Irishman should at the end of the world behold with the eyes of the flesh the destruction of the earth and the day of judgment.

Still the divine favor was not exhausted; Patrick made four other petitions; he wished to assure the salvation of his people, and feared that he had not made it easy enough. The first was, that all Ireland should be saved by participation in the merits of its apostle; second, that all those who on the day of his birth should chant the hymn in his honor, should see the acceptance of the penance which they did for their sins; thirdly, that those who should devoutly celebrate his memory, should find favor before God, and not perish eternally; fourth, that on the day of judgment all the Irish should have him as their judge. This last favor was great; it

* Nennius, § 64.

† Nennius, *Elv. Probus, Vita Patricii*.

placed St. Patrick in the rank of the apostles, to whom it was said,* "You shall sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel." Yet he obtained it; a little before his death, an angel announced to him that nothing had been refused to him; that Patrick might be at rest as to the future destiny of that people, which caused him such constant, such touching anxiety.

At first he had received his institution from God and the church; † he wished, too, to have his last investiture from Heaven and from Rome. He went to obtain the Papal approbation, and returned with the pallium.

His last years were spent in the sweets of retirement and of the contemplative life. ‡ Yet at times he would leave his cherished cloisters of Sabhall or of Armagh; once a year the national synod assembled, and the thirty bishops who governed the new church received the inspirations of Ireland's pontiff. Thus he passed thirty years, living, so to speak, between heaven and earth, half hidden from the view of the people, who honored and invoked him as a living pastor, and as a patron transfigured in the heavenly world; § for the hymn of St. Patrick, even then, resounded in oratory and basilica. Sechnall told him one day that he wished to eulogize a saint whom the earth still possessed. "Hasten, then," said the apostle, "for thou art at the gates of death." Sechnall wrote the hymn and died. Patrick thus enjoyed a foretaste of the glory of the saints, and it was in this sweetness of the half-human life, and this anticipated beatitude, that he awaited from his guardian angel the signal to prepare for death.

* St. Fiech, Hymn.

† Usher, *Eccles. Britannicæ Antiquit.* p. 372.

‡ Jocelyn, *Vita Patricii*, c. 191. Fiech, Hymn.

ty. The place of his repose had been miraculously pointed out to him.* One day, while announcing the word of God to a multitude, a brilliant cloud, lit up by a flash of lightning, descended earthward from heaven ; it hovered a moment over the assembly ; then, settling on the summit of Leithglass, it vanished. The people durst not question Patrick, but they spoke to Bridget. Bridget told them, "Ask Patrick." But Patrick answered her, "Thou and I are equal ; do thou reveal this mystery." And Bridget declared that it was the spirit of Patrick, come to visit the spot where his body was to repose. Then Patrick told Bridget to make, with her own hand, a winding sheet to bury him in ; it was in this winding sheet that he wished to rise on the day when God should call him to eternal life.

When the appointed time drew nigh, Patrick set out for Armagh ; there did he wish to die.† The angel reminded them that he had promised Dichu's son to die on his ground, and leave him his mortal remains ; Patrick returned then to Sabhall.

Such is the burden of traditions ; for, strange to say, a mysterious uncertainty soon settled over the place of his interment ; ‡ it was a new point of resemblance with Moses. "The holy spot," says tradition, "was long venerated."§ Once, when they wished to erect a church there, flames issued from the tomb ; a religious awe checked the work ; veneration redoubled for that holy memory.

No writing has transmitted the remembrance of the wonders that must have been accomplished on that

* Ulstan., Vita Brigide.

† Nennius.

† Fiech, Hymn. Jocelyn, Vita Patriaili.

§ Elv. Probus.

spot.* The very site seems to have been blotted, for a time at least, from the minds of men, if it be true that miraculous signs were needed to find it again in the twelfth century. But who knows whether Ireland did not wish to hide from the foreign invader the true spot of her holy sepulchre?

At the very moment of his death, his body was not confided to mortal hands.† It was wrapped in the winding sheet that Bridget's hands had prepared; but the angels embalmed, buried, and watched it; angels chanted over him the hymns and psalms of the dead. During the funeral rites the sun did not set; twelve days and twelve nights it shone on Erin.

It is related that the people of Ulidia and of Armagh contended for the precious remains, and that the sea advanced to separate them; and then there appeared two chariots exactly alike, proceeding at the same time towards the two cities. At a certain distance, on the banks of the Cancune, the chariot of Armagh vanished. Such is Jocelyn's account; but is not this the faith of Ulidia, and according to the faith of Armagh was it not the chariot of Ulidia that disappeared?

Such was St. Patrick's life. The story has been long; but is not St. Patrick, so to speak, his whole people? Under God, he was the creator of Ireland; he drew it from nothingness, fashioned it with his hands, animated it with his breath, and leaving it, seems to have left it his faith and his soul. Is not faith in St. Patrick the religion of Ireland, and is not Ireland's religion her whole history? Is it not Erin herself?

* Jocelyn, Vita Patricki.

† Eiv. Probos.

CHAPTER V.

ST. PATRICK'S COMPANIONS.

ON arriving from Gaul, Patrick had with him twenty companions. This intrepid little army soon increased. Albeus rallied to it; Declan submitted; Ibar, Kiaran, and Abban united to form around Patrick a powerful combination of power and light.

Then came the disciples, the pupils of the masters formed rapidly by the grace of Heaven. The workmen multiplied as the harvest became more vast and more dense, and seemed to spring from the soil with the harvest — Maccecthus, Macnessius, Maccaerthenn: in vain should we try to number them; they are to be counted by hundreds. They must indeed have been numerous, to meet the wants of that rapid mission. Patrick arrived and spoke; the people were converted; a church was founded, promptly built, such was the simplicity of Irish architecture; a disciple received from Patrick his last lessons and his *abgetoria* — that is to say, the Roman alphabet, and a new Christian community was formed, a new bishop installed.

In the long life of the patriarch, generations were renewed around him, and passed successively under his discipline. He beheld the birth of many, who, later, before his own eyes, brought the greatest renown to the Irish church. One day King Daire, passing through Dalriada, heard from a tomb a voice like a plaintive

moan. When the grave was opened, a sweet odor exhaled ; * an infant was moaning on its mother's corpse. Then they told the prince that a woman came from beyond the sea ; that sinking under the heat and restlessness of a fever, she died before giving to the light the little creature that she bore in her, and that there, in the shades of the tomb and the bosom of death, the child had sought the way that was to lead to light. "Poor child !" cried the affected prince. He took the child ; Patrick baptized it, and the word "Poor child," in Irish *Olcan*, which gushed from Daire's heart, remained the touching name which marked the child born of a corpse and drawn from the tomb. *Olcan* became, subsequently, one of the brightest luminaries of Ireland. Among these children adopted by St. Patrick, several have, too, a touching or pleasing history.

Fervent was the faith and ardent the toil in this sacred band. Powerful was the word, more powerful still the works. Mochteus, alone, formed three hundred priests and a hundred bishops ; and when, still a child, he crossed the British sea,† it sufficed to dip his finger into the swollen billow to calm all the fury of the storm. But the task was too rude and laborious. Ireland was to be ploughed, tilled, fructified, and harvested from one extremity to another ; its isles visited, its moors traversed, its mountains crossed, its people called, its magi confounded or touched, its princes converted or mastered. This was not all. They had to pray, read, study ; they had to establish, organize, and direct churches, monasteries, and schools. Nor was this all. The keen and skilful axe of the new Christians might

* *Evinus, Vita Patricii tripartita.*

† *Vita Mocti.*

transform forests into churches; but the axe represented almost all Irish industry, and skilful as was the hand that plied it, it could not do all. The churches needed vessels, vestments, and books. The disciples undertook to supply them; sacred vessels, crosiers and mitres, dalmatics and chasubles, bells, cymbals, the copying, binding, and adorning of books, all these they learned to make, and made well.* Fortchern worked in iron; Essa, Tassa, and Biteus, in steel; Cuana, Mactal, wrought copper; and some of these blessed workmen produced masterpieces: such was the famous reliquary of Finn Fardheach, by Maccect of Domnachloeabain. Not long after men counted the three hundred bells, three hundred pastoral crosiers, and three hundred gospel books, all coming from the skilful hands of the holy bishop Dagœus,† and the memory of the gold work of Asic was preserved in the last century in the church of Elphin.‡ The women had their part. Liupita, Tigrida, Crumtheris, wove and embroidered, and were the first mistresses of the Irish women. Who formed these apprentices, these companions, these masters? Heaven came to their aid. Many had learned and practised their art by the grace of God, and then made disciples.§

Thus did Patrick's disciples labor in mind, in word, by hand; long years were spent in this laborious life; long did they remain near their master, attached to his person, sharing the hardships of his wandering life; and when their heads had whitened and their bodies bent down, when strength was exhausted, if Patrick per-

* Vita Patrioli tripartita.

† Vita Dagœi.

‡ Ware, *De Hibern. Ant. Disquis.*

§ See, in the *Four Masters*, i. 137, the curious account of the artists and workmen that formed St. Patrick's family.

ceived that their time of rest had come, he gave them (to use his own language) a place of repose ; he confided a church to their care. Once on a time the unwearied apostle returned from the northern parts of Ireland ; * they were passing through trackless, swampy parts, and Maccaerthenn, the staff of his old age, took him upon his shoulders as he had done ; for so many years had not gathered over the head of the faithful disciple without weakening his limbs, and curving his shoulders. Patrick felt him bend ; he heard the painful sounds of his wearied breath. " My son," he said, " I had not perceived that thou wast getting weak." " My father and my lord," replied Maccaerthenn, " I am bending beneath the weight of years. All your other sons, my fellow-disciples and contemporaries, have obtained of thy paternal goodness a place of refreshment and repose ; my soul feels that its weakness needs to recollect itself in contemplation." Then the apostle, taking compassion on his disciple, gave him Clogher, in the vicinity of the primatial see of Armagh. But in school or in solitude, in church or in cloister, the disciples were ever submissive, and the master ever severe ; Patrick had organized the new church in strength, and administered it with apostolic vigor. The two Maccaerthenns of Clogher, and of Donnach-Mor, thought they could, without recurring to Patrick, ordain a bishop ; it was Eochad, one of the sons of King Aileach. When they appeared before St. Patrick, he reprov'd them with vehemence for their hardihood in introducing into the church the son of a ravening wolf, and he inflicted on them a severe punishment. " Your sees shall be smitten," he said ;

* *Vita Patricii tripartita.*

"Donnach-Mor shall never rise from its poor and humble condition ; Clogher shall be ever afflicted with discord."

Thus, as long as Patrick lived, the work never ceased for an instant ; the toil knew no truce, no relaxation. Patrick was present and living in each of his ministers. And surely, to make Ireland the isle of saints, to bring to a conclusion with such brilliant success so great an enterprise, amid the difficulties which it met, it was not too much that the ardent energy and superhuman power of Patrick was manifested and acted on all points of Ireland at once, multiplied in his numerous disciples.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SAINTS AND THE PRINCES.

CHRISTIANITY, arriving in Ireland, had to confront the people, the priests, and the princes. The conscience of the people acquiesced, their imagination was seduced, their eyes were struck, and they believed. Their superstitions, gross remnant of ancient religions, could not offer any serious resistance; yet the magi struggled; they opposed St. Patrick; they were even later contending with Mochteus and Columbkil. But the contest could not long be a serious one. It soon transformed like magic itself. This episode of the magi is curious, but we find it, too, among the Bretons. The princes remain.

All established powers are naturally suspicious; by a sort of instinct they dread and repel all novelties, ready later to accept and favor them, if they hope to profit by them. Among the Irish princes some were doubtless armed against the new faith by the spirit of national superstitions and traditions, or by the interested exhortations of the magi; some were persecutors, and committed cruel violence; Eochad, king of Ulster, for example, cast into the sea his two daughters whom Patrick had converted and consecrated to God.* But to multiply and prolong the resistance, more general and powerful causes were needed.

* Vita Patricii tripartita.

The Irish princes not only governed Ireland, but possessed it; at once chieftains of the people and owners of the soil. Now the church established by Patrick claimed its share in the ownership and the government.

Christianity was established at once in the mind of the Irish people and on the soil of Erin. In the minds Christianity penetrated without an effort; it found them, so to speak, empty. On the soil, the church did not conquer a domain without resistance; it found the soil occupied.

On another side, faithful to its moral mission, the new religion wished to do good and prevent evil; regulating human passions, it was especially to regulate those of the great; and from the outset it intervened in the government of Irish society; it took its stand between the people and the princes, between the oppressors and the oppressed.

In one word, the missionaries had to struggle against the spirit of property, against passion. They had then especially to struggle with princes, who defended at once the integrity of their domains and the freedom of their passions. It is useless to say that this struggle commenced by Patrick outlived his day, and that the Irish princes were never sufficiently converted to make it disappear entirely.

Moreover, the Irish monarchy, as MacGeoghegan loves to style it, was ordinarily and in fact a real pentarchy, and each archy was subdivided into lesser principalities, where inferior princes cantoned in their portion of property and rule, lands and men; commanding men with a species of authority peculiar to the political system of the clans; possessing the lands in full and entire right, as an inheritance.

Between the apostles and the princes the strife was divided, multiplied, renewed like the power attacked; the victory was to be won, not in this place, or in that, but every where; it was not one victory to be gained, but a thousand.

"Give us," said Albeus to a king,* "give us that island, that we may build a monastery there." "I have not seen that island," replied the king; "and I will not give it till I know its size." At that very instant the island, by a marvel of divine power, approached the king's vision, and stretched out full before him; and when he beheld it he gave it to the holy bishop.

Things did not always result thus. "At that time," says the Life of St. Maccaerthenn, "King Eochod greatly tormented the man of God; he drove from the pasture the ox which carried the baggage of the saint and his disciples, and tied it to a rock. The ox, pressed by hunger, bellowed thrice, and the sound reëchoed afar; then the king's magician ran up to tell them that they did very wrong to tie the ox. "Know, O king, that every foot of land where its bellowings have been heard, shall one day belong to Maccaerthenn." Eochod, provoked at this, sent his men to drive off the saint and extinguish his fire. But they could not succeed; and when the prince endeavored to go in person, he was struck motionless, and became like a marble statue. He was forced to intercede.

After all, it was not princes alone who protested against this quaint way of taking possession. One day, for example, Mochoemoc went with his monks to a part of Leinster called Enachtre, near Mount Bladhma,† and

* Usher, *Vita Ailbei*.

† *Vita Mochoemoci*, Colgan. The Bollandists.

began to build a monastery. The owner came up, and warned him not to waste his soil, as he would not give up his land. "I shall remain here," replied Mochoemoc, "till I am taken by the hand and dragged off." The other seized him to expel him. "Tell me thy name," said the saint. His name was Bronach. "Well," said Mochoemoc, "thou hast been well named, for henceforth thou shalt be unhappy till the last day of thy life." (*Bronach* in Irish means *unhappy*.) And Bronach went away with a heavy heart, for he knew that the prophecy would be fulfilled.

A holy man * found an island fit for an anchorite's abode; he took up his residence there. When the owner came with his flocks and people, the saint asked him to retire, that his eyes might not be exposed to the sight of women. The other would not consent; the isle was his, come to him from his forefathers in full right of inheritance. St. Bridget was called; as she was good and merciful, the owner was not punished; a powerful wind took him and his, and bore them far from the island gently and without doing them any harm.

The great and true proprietors of the soil of Ireland were the princes; they had then to undergo this kind of evangelical violence and holy occupation, wherever it was not prevented by voluntary donations. But the voluntary donations were numerous, and the Irish church was too young and too fervent to be avaricious. Mida established himself at the foot of Mount Luachra. The people of Hua-Consail offered him all the lands which extended around his cell; but the saint would accept only four acres to cultivate vegetables for her table. The

* *Animosus, Vita St. Brigidæ.*

Hua-Conaill were displeased. "What you refuse now," they said, "we will give it thee, when thou shalt have left us for heaven." * It is not in the invasions of the saints, or in the avarice of princes, that we must seek a full explanation of the antagonism which seems to divide them in the first age of Christian Ireland. The true cause is more glorious for the church.

This antagonism was in fact deep and impassioned ; the struggle was sometimes singularly animated.

Patrick † had traced with his hand the ideal image of royalty ; and this definition became, at a later day, in the synods, a canon of the Irish church :—

"The justice of a just king is this : To judge no man unjustly ; to be the protector of the stranger, the widow, and the orphan ; to repress theft, punish adultery ; not to keep buffoons or unchaste persons ; not to exalt iniquity ; to efface the impious from the land, exterminate parricides and perjurers ; to defend the poor and nourish them by liberal alms ; to appoint just men over the affairs of the kingdom ; to consult wise and temperate elders ; to avoid the superstitions of magicians, pythonesses, and augurs ; to defend his native land against its enemies, rightfully and stoutly ; in all things to put his trust in God."

What were, on the other hand, the duties of the bishop ? Let us hear the voice of the synods ; ‡ it is metaphoric and strange ; but it is positive and expressive. "The chief (the bishop) must be the land which supports, the pilot who directs, the anchor that stays, the hammer that strikes, the sun that enlightens, the dew which moistens,

* Colgan, *Vita Mida.*

† Capit. Select.

‡ De Abusionibus Seculi.

§ Id., Spicil. Dachetil.

the tablet to be written on, the book to be read, the mirror to be seen in, the terror that terrifies, the image of all that is good ; and let him be, too, all for all."

Now as closely as Patrick's disciples approached this awful and holy ideal, as remotely perhaps did kings more frequently diverge from the model traced out for them ; and the two powers seemed to represent in themselves, and in their struggle, the very strife of good and evil, of heaven and hell, of God and Satan ; there, too, was it at times revealed to the eyes of the saints, and under visible forms.

One day that Mochoemoc and Comgall were reading together,* the prior of the monastery came and said, " O friends of God, I ponder in amazement on a vision which God has shown me on the way ; horror and fear trouble my soul ; for I beheld above the king's castle a demon seated calmly there above ; and, on the contrary, I beheld a multitude of demons assembled around our house, and apparently preparing for a fearful combat." Comgall remained silent ; but Mochoemoc said, " Let us rise, father, and give thanks to God. If the wrath of the evil one is turned against our brethren, it is because they are faithful. Against us he sends his army ; while at the palace a single demon sits like a servant in his master's house, calmly awaiting his call ; but take the monastery on the left, I will take it on the right, and we will expel the demons." The evil ones in fact soon fled, returning to the king's castle, and intrenching there as in a solid post.

Can we, after this, wonder at the holy wrath, the sharp words, bitter resentment, bloody punishments which

* Vita S. Mochoemoc (Fulcherii) in Colgan and the Bollandists.

so often befell the princes of Erin? Let us not forget, moreover, that Ireland was then barbarous. On the side of the princes, the attack was often gross and violent; and in the soul of these adversaries it will not be wonderful if at times we meet the vehement passions of uncivilized life, tried and sanctified, but ever prompt, violent, terrible even in good as they were in evil.

In a great assembly held at Leighlin, St. Munnu kept them waiting.* "And why," cried Subné, King Domnail's son, "why wait all this while for that leper?" "O prince," answered the holy Abbot Lasrean, turning pale as he spoke, "use not such words of St. Munnu; if his body is not here, his spirit is present; I know that where he is, he has heard thy words, and God will avenge the insult to his servant." The same day before evening, Munnu arrived; and after the two saints had saluted each other, Subné drew nigh to Munnu to ask his blessing; but the saint repulsed him. "Why comest thou," he said, "to ask a leper's blessing? In truth I tell thee, that when thou didst speak evil of me, Christ at his Father's right hand blushed; I am a member of Christ, and he is my head; and whoso causes the member, causes the head to suffer. Before this month is passed, thy kindred shall kill thee, cut off thy head, and cast it into the waters of the Barrow, which it shall never leave." The month had not expired when Subné's nephew accomplished the prophecy.

Mochoemoc appealed to the King of Cashel;† the prince answered his petition in contemptuous words, styling him a "little bald head." Scarcely had he

* Usher, Vita Munnu.

† Vita S. Mochoemoc. Bollandists. March.

uttered the guilty words, when one of his eyes was struck with blindness, and filled with intense pain.

On another occasion, — for at times these princes were hardened by the Lord like Pharaoh of old, — he declared to the same king that he saw on him two demons, who rode him as a horseman does a horse. "And how shall I know that you see them?" said the king. "Thou shalt have two signs," replied the saint: "this night a woman that thou lovest shall die, and to-morrow morning two horsemen on white steeds shall come and speak to thee, nor shalt thou know whence they come or whither they go."

Bridget herself, the tender and the merciful, how she treats queens! how she speaks of princes!* While she dwelt in the land of Bregia, Connal's daughter-in-law came to ask her prayers, for she was barren. Bridget would not go to receive her; but leaving her without, sent one of her maidens. When the nun returned, "Mother," she asked, "why would you not go and see the queen, and pray Heaven to give her a son? for you often pray for the wives of peasants." "Because," said the servant of God, "the poor and the peasant are almost all servants of God, while the sons of kings are serpents, children of blood and fornication, except a small number of elect. But after all, as she has had recourse to us, go back and tell her that she shall have a son; he will be wicked, and his race shall be accursed; yet he shall reign many years."

When such was Bridget's blessing, can we wonder that so many others cursed?

* *Animosus, Vita S. Brigide.*

Ailell, King of Munster, insulted Kiaran ; for seven days he was deprived of speech, and suffered intolerable pain ; he humbled himself and was pardoned ; but the chastisement had been severe ; at least it would have seemed so any where but in Ireland.

Thus kings feared and sometimes bore the holy liberty of the bishops.* Aidus employed his charity and zeal in seeking out and repairing iniquities, in rescuing from slavery and imprisonment those unjustly detained. He one day claimed a maiden, but the king would not let her go. Then the saint, raising his voice, said to the imprisoned one, " Follow me, my daughter ; " and he took her through the crowd, leaving the king and his guards filled with amazement. " Kings," adds the biographer, " kings hated Aidus ; but by a power from on high, they were forced to do his will."

How could they resist this invincible force, this formidable vengeance ? What could visible power do against the invisible ? And when the legions of heaven armed all to give victory to Mochoemoc, what could the King of Cashel do, even had he at his beck the armed youth of the five kingdoms of Erin ? The first night after the dispute between the king and the holy bishop, an old man took the king by the hand, and led him to the northern city walls ; there he opened the king's eyes, and he beheld all the Irish saints of his own sex in white garments, with Patrick at their head ; they were there to defend Mochoemoc, and they filled the plain of Femyn. The second night the old man came again, and took him to the southern wall, and there he saw the white robed glorious army of Ireland's virgins led by Bridget ; they

* Vita S. Aidi.

too had come to defend Mochoemoc, and they filled the plain of Monael.

All were not equally severe, so terrible in their wrath, so violent against resistance ; the most awful had their hours of indulgence, and then the miracle became a lesson where a quaint malice was blended with the moral. Of old, the angel Victor gave a treasure trove to pay Milcho for Patrick's liberty ; when Patrick departed, the gold disappeared, nothing remaining but vile dust. A prisoner's liberty cost Kieran no more,* and that day King Aengus lost at once the price of a bad action and the opportunity of doing a good one. Another Kieran, Abbot of Cluain, had intrusted to his hands the treasures of King Furbic. The king was told that the holy abbot was distributing the treasure among the poor ; nor was the charge unfounded. Great was at first the royal wrath ; then he calmed down, and merely asked for seven cows ; simply requiring, — and it seems that the condition was hard to fulfil, — that they should be red, with white heads, and all have horns. The two Kierans, the bishop and the abbot, united in prayer ; seven horned red cows appeared, with white heads ; and these they sent to Furbic. But they entered his stables that evening, and all disappeared by morning.

It happened sometimes, too, that at the moment when the mighty and infallible words dropped from the saint's lips, the saint would be touched and affected at the sight of the wretch whom he was about to punish. Even then they could be appeased. The curse pronounced, begun even, must have its course ; such was its resistless power, that it acted like a blind and fatal force ; but it could

* Vita Kierani.

be averted as we avert the lightning of heaven.* Saint Aidus, the son of Sedias, was cursing a guilty prince. "O father," cried a child, "let thy curse descend rather on this rock!" The rock flew into fragments, but the prince was saved.

It might happen, too, that the prince, guilty against one saint, and threatened by him, had deserved well of another by some better actions. Now, if malediction was resistless to do evil, benediction must have been equally efficacious to prevent it. Kings knew it well. "I care not for thy curse, Mochoedoc," said Aengussa; "Cummin, the son of Fiache, who is a great saint, has blessed me, and even promised me temporal and eternal happiness."

Yet even in such cases the saints were not disarmed. "I will not curse what Cummin has blessed," replied Mochoedoc, "but I will curse thy wife and child."

The same Mochoedoc said to King Colman, "I have asked three things of God against thee; two have been refused to me; I have obtained the third. I asked that thou shouldst be struck with instant death, but St. Fachnan has obtained of God for thee fourteen years more of life. I asked that thou shouldst never enter heaven, but by the favor of St. Cainnech thou shalt be received there. I have asked that before the end of this month thou shouldst be deprived of thy kingdom, and God has granted my prayer."

If, however, the sinner became humble, it was never too late, and the saint's charity ingeniously discovered a means of arranging the matter. Colman repented; he made presents, and Mochoedoc relented. "Thou shalt

indeed be dethroned," he continued, "and barely escape with thy life; but as there are saints that love thee, thou shalt, after three days, be restored to thy power."

With regard to Aengussa, he was not more inflexible; and yet the prince's obstinacy was great. His wife and son, at the malediction launched on them, prostrated themselves in terror and alarm. Mochoedoc spared them. "But I will curse," he said, "the lake that environs thy city and gives it strength." The lake disappeared. The king was unmoved. "I will curse the daughter of thy love, and thy proud and rapid courser, thy reliance in battle;" and both died. Aengussa could not bear up against this double blow; he was touched, and gave lands to build a church. Mochoedoc did not wish the destruction of the sinner, but only that he should do penance; he gave him back his lake, his beloved daughter, and his champing war horse.

Did motives foreign alike to religion, justice, and charity never intervene in these quarrels? Did they never assume a political character? Do we not find at times the church or its saints mingling in the rivalry of ambition, in family feuds, in pretensions of caste, in the interest of clans? We may with some probability suppose it. The King of Cashel spoke with insolence to Bishop Colman. "It does not become thee," said Mochoedoc, "to speak thus to a great prelate, who, before God, is a saint, and who, in this world's nobility, is thy equal; for you are of the same race." Under the pride of the priesthood and sanctity, there was still the pride of blood. The instincts and feelings of family and tribe might naturally persist amid the interests of God and the church. A striking fact; moreover, an episode of that struggle which we follow under its legendary form,

will show at once the character, form, and proportions that that contest might assume.

Dermid, son of Herbaill,* ruled over all Ireland, and all matters came before his tribunal. Columba appeared in his presence to claim the liberation of Liber. As the king, in this case, did not judge with equity, the man of God rose in wrath, and exclaimed before the whole assembly, "Know, O unjust king, that thou shalt never behold my face in thy realm, till God, the just Judge, has crushed thy haughty throne. For as this day thou hast affronted me before thy nobles by thy unjust sentence, so shall the Eternal affront thee in the day of battle before thy enemies." With these words he mounted his horse, and smote it with his whip; the blood gushed from the horse. Then the king's council, troubled as if at a prodigy, urged the king to do the saint's will and obey him, lest his power should be scattered by the Almighty; but the king, transported with fury, closed his eyes to their good advice.

Resolved to avenge himself on the race of Columba, he swore to reduce it all to bondage; and to fulfil his oath, he assembled a large army, chariots, cavalry and foot soldiers, and with two thousand three hundred men, marched against the Connals, intending to exterminate them. The Connals, at the tidings of the king's approach, assembled to the number of three thousand, resolved to battle manfully for their territory. Amid this people, who were in such peril, and put all their trust in God, Columba, at nightfall, rose in the spirit of divinely-given power, and fortifying his people, said, "If I have ever done any thing against my enemies, to-day,

* Adamnan, Vita Columbæ.

he, "were this church filled with men afflicted with every form of suffering and disease, I should ask God to vouchsafe to assemble in my wretched body all their evils, all their pains, and give me strength to support them patiently, for love of the Saviour of the world."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SAINTS AND THE PEOPLE.

IF there was often war between the saints and the princes, there was, on the contrary, a heartfelt sympathy, a close alliance, between the saints and the people. We find, it is true, St. Senan envelop in his wrath, and annihilate by his curse, a whole city, which had refused him hospitality ; * nor was it a prince to whom Aidan said, " Well hast thou done to repent, for the earth was yawning to swallow thee up." † But these examples are rare, and it was not usually against the people that was armed that avenging wrath so frequently depicted in the history of the Irish saints.

"In a country infested with robbers, where there are few secure and well-fortified retreats," says Gerald Barry, ‡ "churches were the only places of refuge." This explains why the enemies of churches were so energetically repressed, so severely punished. Was it necessary to break a will obstinate in evil, extort a donation from avarice, punish contemners of the divine law, terrify violators of holy places, repel sacrilegious invasions, — a man arose whose word was a sword. But more frequently still, wretchedness was to be succored, pain consoled, and suffering alleviated. If the new prophets, following the law of their master, were sometimes "the ham-

* Vita Senani, in Colgan.

† Vita Aidani.

‡ Topog. Hib.

mer which strikes and the terror that terrifies," they were almost always "the dew which moistens and the sun that warms." Were the weak to be protected, prisoners delivered, tears wiped away by restoring the sick to health, or the dead to life; were the people to be defended against the cruel evils of war, or bread to be multiplied in starving hovels,—then it was that the marvellous power and touching charity of the saints was lavishly displayed, and the gift of miracles, striking or obscure, majestic or familiar, ingenious or simple, displayed, like an intelligent and attentive servant, its fruitful resources and inexhaustible treasures.

It seems as though the church were at times represented with one hand turning against princes the point of the sword, with the other shielding people under its ægis. Men have vainly sought in the first Christian communities the unfindable type of an equalitarian society; they have drawn from the gospel the ideal code of a democratic Utopia. It is doubtful whether a religion which has always so easily and so well adapted itself to aristocracy, monarchy, and despotism, and which has finally constituted itself a government of autocratic form, is essentially democratic. Equality before God does not imply equality before men; to defer equality till after death is not decreeing it in life; dismissing democracy to the next world is no pledge to establish it here; and this future equality strongly resembles a promise of compensation for present inequality. Moreover, to understand the part which the church has sometimes acted, there is no necessity of bestowing upon it a political scheme: her moral explains every thing.

If the first law which the gospel gives men is not to form a republic, the first obligation which it imposes is

to conform to justice and charity. To preach the gospel, — that is to say, justice and charity, — is then to declare war on all that is unjust and oppressive ; it is to take up the defence of all that is innocent and oppressed. And as there is no oppression but that of force over weakness, the apostles, the ministers of the gospel, are inevitably thrown between the strong and the weak, the great and the little, to protect impotent innocence against malefactor power. As society is more disordered and violent, the more imperious, active, and striking becomes this mission of Christianity ; as it is regulated and moderated, war must die out and expire ; it may terminate by an alliance, whatever be the form of government and its political principle.

No society was more disordered or more violent than that of Ireland, with its families cantoned apart like so many nations, with its clan feuds, its hereditary hatreds and vengeance, with its warlike spirit and predatory habits. Nor did the saints in any other land intervene with such zeal, energy, and charity. We have seen how Aidus, Aidan, Mochoedoc, Maccaerthenn, and Columkill, to protect weakness and innocence, implored, threatened, or smote princes. To relate all the examples of this active and powerful intervention, would be almost to rewrite the whole history of the Irish saints.

The chief of Theaffa came down to ravage a canton of Meath ; * he learned that the people had applied to St. Aidus to make peace with their enemy. On this news he quickened his march. "For," said he to his troops, "we must complete the work before the holy bishop has time to reach us." But Aidus knew their thought, and

* Vita St. Aidi.

he made against them the sign of the cross. And as they were crossing a river, which still separated them from the country which they wished to attack, their horses were suddenly checked by a mysterious power, and they remained there till Aidus came up.

On another occasion, the kings of Tara and Munster met in battle array before Saighir,* the city of St. Kieran. The saint made useless efforts to disarm them; but as they were about to engage, a neighboring forest waves, the uprooted trees formed an impassable barrier between the two armies; the stream which traversed the plain swelled and overflowed, and the two armies fled in terror from each other.

This solicitude, which defended whole armies against their own fury, which saved cities and tribes from massacre and pillage, aided them also against evils sent from above. Columbkil, seeing a thick, ill-boding cloud pass through the air, knew that it was the bearer of a fearful pestilence.† "Let us go," said he to his disciples; and embarking they followed the cloud, and rescued from the pestilence the victims whom it had already seized.

Thus did the saints mingle in the national life: we find them in every crisis and every danger. Nor did they reserve their power and their charity for great occasions and general calamities. Besides these striking manifestations, these miracles which form the holy portion of Irish history, they daily and hourly accomplished by the road side, by the hearth of poverty, for the humblest misery, works no less divinely stamped. It is the most profoundly popular part of the legend. It escapes analysis, it defies citation, so simple and familiar is it at

* Vita Kierani

† Adamnan, Vita Columbae.

times. Can we speak of the marvellous pot, in which game came of itself, and which enriched the happy family to whom Columbkille had given it? Can we relate how milk and butter came up inexhaustible from the bottom of vessels already drained? how the barren cow, the poor woman's sole stay, became suddenly fruitful? how sheep eaten by the wolves returned to their afflicted owners? how at the village table, water was transformed to wine or mead? In what terms can we relate the thousand stories, transmitted from evening to evening by the admiration of generations that had seen these prodigies, preserved and multiplied doubtless by the remembrance and regret of those who would fain have seen them repeated for themselves? These stories are too quaint; but in their occasionally rude quaintness there is something indescribably sympathetic and touching; for they attest at once the misery of past generations, the charity of the saints, and the gratitude of the poor.

The miracles of the Irish saints are not, I believe, articles of faith; without questioning their merits, we may then, if not Irish born, be permitted to doubt the marvellous signs by which they show them; but by admitting that their whole legend is only a kind of epic, half monastic and half popular, alternately ingenious and rude, vulgar and poetic, simple and brilliant, dramatic and artless, we must also admit that most of these stories are symbols. Men have passed amid the nations doing good. Gratitude has transmitted their actions, imagination has transformed them. Their miracles are perhaps invented; their virtues are not; and there is always something true in these fictions, something human in this supernatural, something moral in this fancy. The people were not satisfied with preserving the memory of the

benefits which they had received, and transmitting them in narratives which imagination multiplied and embellished. They moreover vowed to their benefactors a veneration, which the whole church inherited. Monks and priests became sacred and inviolate. "Although our nation," said Maurice, Bishop of Cashel, to Gerald Sylvestris, "may seem rude and cruel, it has always rendered great respect and honor to the church; never has it seen any one raise his hand against the saints of God."* And Stanihurst, in the sixteenth century, bore the same testimony. "Priests," said he, "are in great honor among them; should war set the kingdom in flames, the ecclesiastics, like heralds bearing the caduceus, could go every where without any risk or harm."†

Thus have centuries perpetuated the alliance of the saints and the people, of Catholicity and Ireland, founded by St. Patrick, cemented by his disciples. Revolutions have failed to shake it; persecution has not broken it; it has gained strength in blood and tears; and we may believe, after thirteen centuries of trial, that the Roman faith will disappear from Ireland only with the name of St. Patrick and the last Irishman.

* Topograph. Hibern.

† De Rebus in Hibernia gestis.

CHAPTER VIII.

ST. BRIDGET.

IN the stories which nourished the easy faith of the Irish people, and which enlivened their misery ; in the inexhaustible, yet simple, story of charity, one name returns more frequently than others ; it is the name of St. Bridget. Bridget was the most generous heart, the tenderest and most feeling soul among all these holy souls, all these benevolent hearts that loved and succored poor Ireland ; but it seems, too, as though the popular imagination took pleasure in portraying, in the form of a woman, the sweetest of powers, the dearest of virtues. " Why," asked the king, " have you given to the poor the sword which I had presented to your father ? " " If my God," replied Bridget, " told me to give my father, too, and you yourself, I would give both with all that you possess." In the legend other saints, and before all St. Patrick, represent, doubtless, Christian and apostolic perfection ; Bridget represents mercy and charity. The greatest and best had in their sanctity something dazzling and awful ; their mission was to do good, but, especially, at the same time, to govern, and sometimes to punish. Bridget, too, governed. Patrick seems, in dying, to have bequeathed her his spirit ; and when the Irish church, at the death of her powerful apostle, seemed for an instant to halt and totter, it was Bridget who supported it and led it on in its path ; she was for

an instant, so to say, Bishop and Primate of Ireland ; but this too human and almost masculine part of her history the people have seemed anxious to forget, so as to behold in their sweet patroness only the woman, the merciful virgin, whom they place in a radiant trinity between Patrick and Columbkille.

Bridget and Patrick are moreover as inseparable in their history as in the memory of Ireland. From the assembly of Tailten, where Patrick beheld her and adopted her as his daughter,* she was attached to him ; she walked, so to speak, in his shadow ; she became also, thenceforward, the greatest after him in the Irish church. "Thou art my equal," said he to her at Leth Glass. Patrick was interred in the winding sheet that he would have her make him with her own hands ; and later, when Bridget died, the piety of the faithful would not suffer them to be separated in death ; their bones reposed in the same tomb, waiting for Columbkille to come and share it with them. The church consecrated and honored the holy and threefold alliance † in her festival and in her prayers ; they were the three torches, the seed, the three glorious patrons of Ireland.

While the people preserved her memory and repeated the wonders of her life, saints, abbots, bishops, felt it an honor to commit them to writing ; if in the time of Nennius sixty-six had written the life of St. Patrick, Kilian, in the eighth century, writing that of St. Bridget, enumerates those who had written it before him : they were Ultan, Eleran, Animosus, illustrious names in the Irish church, without speaking of Cogitosus and others.

* Vit. Brigid., auct. Animosus.

† Off. Transl. Patric., Brig., SS. et Columbkille.

And who knows how many after them took up again the sweet and wonderful theme? for biographers had not only to relate the benefits where her power and gentleness were displayed in prodigies, simple and familiar, easy doubtless to do for any Irish virgin saint, easy to be believed by any Irish auditory, but a little too vulgar perhaps to charm or strike the imagination, the ear, accustomed to miracles. Bridget had not only done good, she sometimes did it with an ingenious and lovely grace; sometimes she was pleased to show in her works, not only the charity and power of a saint, but also the poetic and romantic imagination of a daughter of Erin.

"Virgin," cried Connal, "make haste, and bless me, for my brother Corpre is on the way to kill me." Bridget blessed him; when Corpre came up, he, too, asked her benediction, and the two brothers did not recognize each other; they embraced, and went with Bridget, walking peacefully together.*

In those days the saints of both sexes traversed Ireland, evangelizing and preaching, edifying the faithful by their virtues and miracles, and followed by a vast crowd, whom imagination and piety drew to their company. They visited and instructed each other, celebrating pure and holy agapæ like those of the primitive Christians. One day Bishop Broon came to Bridget, followed by a great number,† but they lost their way in the dense woods, and while astray night came on. Now it was a cold winter's night. But Bridget, knowing what had happened, prayed for them. And lo! the

* Vit. Brigid., auc. Ultan.

† Id.

travellers behold Bridget and her virgins coming. She led them with their chariots and horses into a spacious house, and showed them Christian hospitality, washing their feet, repairing their strength by an abundant nourishment, and preparing couches, where they soon sank into gentle slumbers. They believed, therefore, that Bridget was in the midst of them, and really received them into her house. Yet Bridget was afar off; and when morning came, they beheld around them the forest and the spot where they halted the night before, and Bridget coming really with her virgins, to offer them a real hospitality in her real home; for all that had passed in the night was but an illusion, miraculously effected by her prayer.

Amid this hospitable race, in this land where every house was open to the stranger, where every tribe had its guest master, its Biatach, whose lavish hospitality it generously supported, where the harp, and the minstrel's song, and the joyous salutation of the host welcomed whoever knocked at the door, how could the saints but be hospitable? Happier than many others, they could pour out, without exhausting, wine and hydromel; their wealth, inexhaustible like the faith which created it, defied all prodigality. Hence, frequently we find kings with their suites, their armies even, sit down and eat their fill at the ordinary frugal, but ever miraculously renewed, table of a poor bishop or anchoret. Sometimes, even, a holy traveller would come to the succor of his host taken by surprise, and the guests, after a moment's disquiet, beheld the viands re-appear on the platter, and the wine foam again around the goblet's brim. Then they blessed God, and the feast went on more

joyful and more Christian than before. Nor was the verse or the music wanting there ; for all, austere hermits, mystic virgins, grave abbots, venerable bishops, all were children of Erin, and the metallic chords of the national harp vibrated harmoniously to Irish ears. Bridget entered the dwelling of a king of the country of Blioch, and while awaiting the lord of the mansion,* Bridget saw harps hanging on the walls. "Let us hear some chants," said she. The foster-father of the prince and his sons, who were present, excused themselves ; the minstrels were away. "But, if the virgin will bless our hands," said they, "perhaps they will become skilful." Bridget blessed their hands, and they took the harps and drew forth sweet accords ; and the king, as he approached his home, asked, with surprise, who could perform so well. Nor did they ever after forget the art which Bridget had taught them. Such had been her welcome gift,—a present as gracious as the sweet and amiable virgin who offered it.

And such were always the graces obtained of her. Who would have dared to cover himself with her blessing, in order to do evil ?

Moreover, she would have divined their projects and baffled their cruel passions.† Connall came to her one day, bearing magic signs upon him. "We need thy blessing," said he, "to free us from these signs ; for we must go far to seek and slay our foes." "I ask of God," replied the virgin, "that you may, as you desire, be freed from these signs of the demon, that no one may harm you or you any one." Connall went his way, and on

* *Ultan., Vita Brigide.*

† *Id.*

arriving in the land of Criothan, took a castle, burned it, and killed many, whose heads he brought back in great triumph. This was done by night; but when day came, they could not find their sickening trophies, nor trace of blood on their weapons or garments. Awe-struck, they sent spies to reconnoitre the castle, which they had destroyed on the eve, as they supposed; the castle was standing, and its inmates calmly pursuing their avocations.

Connall repented, doubtless, and must soon after have thanked the benign and ingenious power which, unable, at all times, to pacify these warlike souls, tried to sate them, at least, with an appearance of blood, a semblance of carnage, or deceived them by innocent illusions. Returning from an expedition, he entered a castle to pass the night. He had Bridget's benediction, and relied on it for his defence,* if his enemies endeavored to surprise him. They really did spy him out; and three men entered the castle to be certain. They did not see Connall and his warriors, who lay asleep with the heads of their fallen enemies beside them. They beheld, seated around a large fire, men in monastic garb, each with a book open before him. Thus was St. Bridget's client saved.

Such are the accounts of the legendaries. And while some gathered these fantastic stories, others related the daily wonders of her life and the benefits which her solicitous mercy unceasingly scattered over the little and the poor. She had passed every where, every where her charity had left ineffaceable traces, and the country of

* Ullan., Vita Brigide.

Kildare had not a rivulet, a house, or a stone, which did not relate a virtue or a miracle of Bridget.* Can we wonder that so alluring a history charmed the imagination and the heart of a poetic race, and that the sweet form of the heroine shines radiantly amid the saints of the legend as the most beautiful star in the sky of Ireland?

* Topog. Hiberniæ.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SAINTS AND THE WOMEN.

By adopting Bridget as his daughter, before the face of assembled Ireland, by elevating her so high, by declaring her publicly as equal to himself, Patrick did not obey a mere personal sympathy, nor intend to pay an isolated homage to great virtue. He wished, apparently, to labor in the spirit of Christianity, to emancipate woman in Ireland. In this way has Christianity really consummated woman's redemption, sanctified and honored her. Woman was called to the same faith, the same sanctity, the same glory in heaven, the same honors in the church. Now, to admit that the saint of the gentler sex is the equal of the saint of the sterner one, is implicitly recognizing that the woman is, or may be, the equal of the man. The biblical and evangelical principle of woman's inferiority doubtless subsists, and the law promulgated by God, indestructibly established and perpetuated by him in the very nature of his creatures, cannot be recalled; but that principle is explained. The interpretation of Christianity and civilization replaces the interpretation of paganism and barbarity; it is understood that woman's inferiority is, so to speak, an equality in equality; that man being first, and woman second, both are nevertheless alike. Hence it results immediately that woman's subordination is a principle of order, not of oppression. Man keeps his pri-

macy, but woman is free ; there is neither despotism nor anarchy. Such is the Christian ideal, the Christian idea ; and what would prove its truth, did a Christian idea need proof, is the fact that the idea is sometimes realized.

Among savage and barbarous nations, women are often mistresses through the passions ; but by the political and civil law, they are, in the state and the family, slaves. Nor was the case different in pagan Ireland. Patrick had to break alike their sceptre and their yoke, extirpate the vice by which they reigned, efface the law which enslaved them, in order to confer on them, with faith and sanctity, Christian liberty and equality. He sought means in a sort of fraternity, in a close alliance of works and souls, to speak even more exactly, in a spiritual marriage, which he would seem to have been desirous of making a regular institution in his church. We do not mean that the thought had not been conceived or attempted before him ; but undoubtedly no one conceived it more precisely, attempted it more boldly ; he placed there, as elsewhere, the stamp of his lively imagination and ardent spirit.

Women were then welcomed and called ; they were admitted, so to speak, to the sanctuary ; it was shared with them, occupied in common. Double, even mixed monasteries, or monasteries so near to each other as to form but one, brought the two sexes together for mutual edification ; men became instructors of women, women of men ; monks were governed by abbesses, and nuns by abbots ; for the doctrine and practice of the church, as to the subordination of women, were actually forgotten in this fervent association and holy emancipation. These establishments, of which we can trace the

vestiges better in the British and Saxon churches, originated in Ireland; they were propagated by the propaganda of the Irish missionaries. "The saints of the early times," says the author of the Catalogue of Irish Saints, "did not repulse the direction or society of women; founded on Christ, as on the rock, they feared not the blast of temptation."*

Women, it is true, seem to have given pledges to the church. Before St. Patrick, we see Menna, Susanna, and Libaria, sisters of St. Eliphius and St. Eucharius, follow their brethren in their pious exile in Gaul, and, like them, endure martyrdom. At Patrick's voice, they responded, and amid the multitude whom his word drew after him, in his wandering apostleship in Ireland, women were neither the least numerous nor the least ardent. Aethné the fair, and Fethlé the rosy, were but the first fruits of a rich and gladdening harvest; perhaps, too, the daughters of Eochad were not alone in confessing Christ at the expense of their sufferings and blood. Thousands of virgins devoted themselves to God; more than once did an angel come to float the mystic veil over their heads, and thus show, in an unspeakable manner, that these new betrothed ones found favor in the eyes of their divine spouse. Heya and Píala formed with Fingar that first cohort sent by Ireland to the Britons, still, or already, too un-Christian. Many imitators, many pupils, many rivals gathered around Bridget. Some equalled not merely the purity of the saints,—they renewed the rigorous asceticism of the most austere. Thrice did the deep and icy water in which St. Bridget remained during the long hours of night, retire and

* Usher.

dry up before her ; * God himself intervening to moderate the excess of her zeal. Others had that spirit of interior contemplation, of ecstasy, that mystic tenderness which the greatest possess or desire. Daria was blind from birth ; once, while conversing with Bridget, she said, " Bless my eyes, that I may see the world and gratify my longing." The night was dark ; it grew light for her, and the world appeared to her gaze. But when she had beheld it, she turned again to Bridget. " Now close my eyes," said she, " for the more a man is absent from the world, the more present he is before God."

These were sure and worthy companions for Patrick's disciples ; and these spiritual marriages promised fruits of benediction and grace ; for St. Patrick did not confine himself to this common society of men and women in the bosom of the church, of which we have just spoken ; individual associations were formed. Bridget herself, spiritual daughter of St. Patrick, as she was, received from his hands a friend and a guide. " It is unbecoming," he said, one day, " that you should henceforward be without a priest." † He gave her Natfrohic, who never left her. Ninnid subsequently succeeded him — that Ninnid surnamed the pure handed ; a name whose origin is a legend in itself.

Ninnid was a young scholar, not over reverent, it would seem, ‡ whom the influence of Bridget, one day, suddenly overcame. The saint announced to him that from his hand she should for the last time receive the Body and Blood of our Lord. Ninnid resolved that his hand should remain pure for so high and holy an office ;

* *Animosus, Vita Brigidæ.*

† *Ultan., Vita Brigidæ.*

‡ *Animosus.*

he enclosed it in an iron case ; and wishing, at the same time, to postpone, as far as lay in him, the moment that was to take Bridget from Ireland, he set out for Brittany, throwing the key of the box into the sea. But the designs of God are immutable ; when Bridget's hour had come, Ninnid was driven by a tempest on the Irish coast, and the key was miraculously given up by the deep.

It was a friendship of soul to soul, whence both derived aid, happiness, and consolation. It might be precious to the strong ; and great were they who could walk alone in life, resting on God alone. "It is not necessary for thee to have a friend of thy soul," said the angel to St. Aidan ; "God loves thee, and between God and thee there will be no intermediary one ; but if thou wishest a friend for thy soul, thou shalt have Molvé, the widow."

Nothing is more pure, more elevated, more touching. When Christianity can possess itself of man's passions and sentiments, it idealizes, spiritualizes, and transfigures them ; it seeks to sanctify, not destroy them. Now, there are in our hearts two loves, or our love may tend at the same time to two objects, our fellow-men and God. One of these aspirations is merely human ; the other half divine. To withdraw our instincts of love from the creature, our fellow-man, and direct them to God alone, is suppressing one sentiment and preserving the other. Should we suppress aught that the Author of our being has planted in us ? But to take a human sentiment, the love of man for man, to affiancé souls, and make this union,—natural as it is, and mystic too,—make it tend to the sanctification of present destiny, and the preparation of that that is to come, is perfecting man ; it is infusing a part of the divinity into a human sentiment.

Unhappily, good is hard to do, and it is, perhaps, even more dangerous to seek the ideal. In this intimate alliance of the earthly and heavenly, the element which should absorb or control may sometimes not control sufficiently, or even be itself absorbed. The legend of Ninid is pure and holy ; and yet there is in it a vein of vivid romance, in which we can already trace the sentiments which these unions might produce, the dangers which might result from them for less firm or less perfect souls.

CHAPTER X.

THE SAINTS AND THE WOMEN — (CONTINUED.)

PATRICK, in the accomplishment of his generous thought, often, doubtless, experienced great and tender joy ; often, doubtless, this heavenly friendship, these holy associations living with a single heart in the bosom of faith, that tender union of purified souls which presented to his eyes the spectacle of a faithful people marching onward to heaven hand in hand, offered him ravishing joy and unspeakable consolation. But he had also at times to experience cruel doubts and bitter anxiety. All were not saints in Ireland ; all had not even that simplicity which makes men believe another's virtue ; that modesty which makes them respect it. Suspicions sprang up ; accusations arose, and reached the fame of those most dear to him. Broon, one of his disciples, heard a woman charge her shame on him ; * it was in the assembly of Tailten, in the face of all Ireland. Nor was Liupita, the apostle's sister, spared ; † and the holy Bishop Moel, was, they said, the accomplice of her crime.

The calumniators were confounded ; but Patrick's apostolic heart must have been cruelly wounded ; and, unfortunately, real facts awakened his disquiet. One of Bridget's sisterhood, Darlughacha, neglected to watch

* Ultan, Vita Brigide.

† Evinus, Vita Patricii.

over her eyes, and profane love entered her soul. Bridget saw her arise by night, and go forth to meet her lover. As she was about to cross the threshold, a violent combat arose in her soul ; for passion was strong within her, and strong was faith, the fear of God, and of Bridget. Ardor had to be checked by ardor, flame by flame ; she placed her feet on burning coals ; and the flesh was overcome only by a long and painful effort.*

Benignus was one of the beloved disciples of Patrick ; God had given him an harmonious voice. A virgin, consecrated to Christ, felt her heart troubled by the chant which should have edified her soul while charming her ears ; and there she was, wandering in her folly, devoured with the desires which her passion prompted. She feigned illness, and asked for Benignus ; from him, she declared, she wished to receive communion. Benignus answered her summons ; but Patrick watched over him ; and when Benignus appeared at the unhappy woman's door, she beheld him whom her love profaned, suddenly magnified into a gigantic and terrible form ; his face shone with a light that illumined the whole house ; the glance of his eye sounded the very depths of the culprit's heart ; near him stood Patrick, his hands extended over the disciple whom he protected.†

She, too, like Darlughaca, was cured of her madness. Bridget had succored her daughter, Patrick had preserved his son ; but were Bridget and Patrick to be ever at hand to sustain the weak ?

If, seated on the summit of Cruachan-Eli, Patrick had called to him all the virgins of his church, more than one countenance would have paled or blushed beneath

* *Animosus, Life of Bridget.*

† *Jocelyn, Vita Patricii.*

the white veil. If, ranging on another side the priestly and monastic legion, he had sounded its serried ranks, more than one heart would have palpitated under the rude vestment or the episcopal cross.

But listen ; for this is the most secret avowal of the sons and daughters of Ireland, the last words of their confession :

“ Carthag, thou wast Kieran’s disciple ; and thou didst learn sanctity under the discipline of Lidania ; shouldst thou not have been stronger, and did it need a terrible and yet aiding flame to come and separate you by drying up the eyes whose light, empoisoned by the evil one, was hurrying to destruction two predestined souls ? *

“ Virgin of Druim-aird, the eye of Aidan, thy bishop, has beheld the remorse laid up in the secret chamber of thy conscience ; penance is holy, but less holy than innocence. †

“ Macness, thou hast purified thyself ; thou art a bishop ; forget not that thou hast not been ever pure, and be humble, remembering that thou didst one day sully thy master’s school and family. ‡

“ And thou, Darerca, since the fruit of thy weakness has found favor before the Lord, be consoled and hope ; but remain prostrate before God, as thou hast been before me on the road where thou hast done penance.” §

Thrice heart-broken and desolate had she prostrated herself in the dust ; thrice had the primate driven his chariot over her.

Few faults, doubtless, if the legend has reckoned all ; faults expiated by heroic penance ! but still too numer-

* Vita Kieran.

† Vita Aidi.

‡ Evinus, Vita Patricii.

§ Id.

ous for Patrick's holy severity. By a just providence, moreover, the dangerous experiment which he had tried in his church was especially painful to his heart; the weight fell on himself; his disciples, his sisters, had fallen!

This hard lesson at least was not lost. Liupita and Moel had confounded the calumny which reached them;* prodigies had attested their innocence; but Patrick's soul was saddened, and doubt had come upon him. "Henceforth," said he to Moel, "fish no more in the fields, reap no more in the rivers; depart from Liupita; we must not tempt God." Moel dwelt at Ard-achadh; Liupita took up her residence at Druimcain; the mountain of Bri-Leith was between them.

From that day, the men consecrated to the church, the women vowed to God, lived apart; and the rule, once established by St. Patrick, was observed by his disciples, and rigorously followed by his successors.

In a Life of St. Senanus, quaintly rhymed by an anonymous author, a woman comes to his convent door. "What have women," said the prelate—"what have women in common with monks? We will not receive thee, nor any like thee." "What!" said she to the bishop, "if thou believest that my spirit can receive Jesus Christ, why repulse my body?" "I believe thee," he said, "but no woman shall ever enter here. Go; God save thy soul, but go, return to the world; among us thou wouldst give scandal; thy heart may be chaste, but the sex is in thy body."†

* Evinus, Vita Patricii.

† Vita Senani, (Colgan.)—

"Cui, Præsul — Quid feminis
Commune est cum monachis?
Nec te nec ullam aliam,
Admittemus in insulam."

Yet this woman was Kynrecha ; and she had been miraculously borne by an angel to the convent door ! "Before I leave this place," said she to St. Senanus, "I offer this prayer to God, that my soul may leave the body." And she sank down expiring. But the saints, once put on their guard, watched with restless vigilance, penetrated as it were with a salutary fear. Even Bridget found anchorets intractable enough to avoid her presence,* and refuse to answer her call. She smiled, and punished them with her usual indulgence ; they repented and came. Who could resist Bridget ? Still later, Columbkille, privileged by God, like Bridget and Patrick, unalterable and tranquil like them, doubtless feared no more than they the sweet commerce that others had to forego. "Bear to Mangina,"† said he, one day, "this water, that I have just blessed, and it will heal her ; and, moreover, I will put in the cover of the vase twenty years of life, that the holy virgin will pass in this world after her cure." Few abbots, few bishops even, would have dared to send a woman this picturesque and affectionate message. Comgen asked that Mida should come and close his lips and eyes in death. "For I know," said he, "that all whom thy hand shall thus touch shall be led by angels to the kingdom of God." But Mida is, after Bridget, the most glorious virgin of Ireland ; ‡ Comgen was one of the most fervent pillars of the church, and this was the homage of a dying man.

In general, then, they kept on the defensive. They went further ; it seems that the spirit of barbarism, so

* Ulstan. Vita Brigide.

† Adamnan, Vita Columbe.

‡ Vita Medæ, (Colgan.)

quickly, perhaps too quickly, driven back by the first outburst of the Christian sentiment, reacted a little later. Thus, in the twelfth century, Giraldus found churches in Ireland closed to women,* certain holy isles they could not enter under penalty of death. In the primitive days of Irish Christianity, such laws had not been formed, such anathemas not drawn up. This harsh sanctity, this rude purity, this strange kind of material mysticism, belongs to another time, and corresponds rather to the theology of Ratramn and Paschasius Radbert than to that of Patrick and Columban.

If woman cannot be a sure instrument of salvation for man, as purely spiritual saints have dreamed ; if woman, wishing to lean on man, often falls ; if these spiritual unions remain unsullied only between natures already angelic, this is enough to justify many measures of precaution, and much prudent severity. But this great anger is strange ; the contempt still more so. If man pronounces anathema on the woman, she may well return it ; and an equitable umpire could not, it would seem, condemn one without the other ; and if man, in such a case, could equitably judge his own cause, would he denounce on himself half his wrath, and half his contempt ?

Moreover, this anger should be just as great as the peril under which one has fallen, or which has been avoided. The saints give us, then, the measure of their strength or their weakness, at the same time as of their light ; milder when they are stronger and more enlightened, more violent when they are less enlightened and more weak.

* Topog. Hiberniæ

Yet the women of Ireland might take consolation and assurance. If men could be saints only far from them, they could be holy far from men ; they continued to embalm with their virtues the churches not closed to them, the solitudes where their cells could be isolated enough. Their names are still numerous in the catalogues ; almost all are so modest, that one might say that they felt it a duty to hide even the scandal of their merits from that austere church.

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL STATE OF MANNERS IN IRELAND, AND THE
INFLUENCE OF THE SAINTS.

PATRICK'S disciples had then learned to guard against the snares which even innocence may involuntarily lay for sanctity. But if they were suspicious and rigorous for themselves, they did not cease to be just, and often merciful and indulgent for others. We must even admit that, vehement against certain faults, intractable against a certain resistance, terrible for certain adversaries, they showed themselves, under other circumstances, incorruptible but clement judges. When they smote, it was with half-checked arm ; when they wounded, it was to heal the better ; and they stooped, to effect these happy cures, to the mildest, most ingenious, most paternal means.

Concraidh was a powerful king of Osrige. Aethne, wife of King Aengus, was smitten with his beauty, his generous hospitality, and loved him. Concraidh would not betray his friend and host ; and the lovesick queen languished, and was soon at the verge of the grave ; at least she said so. In this extremity, and as it was April, adds the quaint chronicler, " she asked Concraidh to give her at least some mulberries, or else she would die. What snare was there in this singular request ? We know not ; but, luckily, Concraidh was a friend of St. Kieran, and the holy man gave him some mulberries

that his hand had blessed. Scarcely had Queen Aethne lifted these to her lips, when she recovered, with her reason, health of mind and body.*

The wife of King Cohing loved King Concolor ; she swore that she would marry him. What would have become of Cohing ? More than one crime was doubtless plotted ; for these Irish amours have sometimes a tragic history. But St. Kieran was nigh, and that agitated heart found calm once more.†

Brunecha had given herself to God. She had the misfortune to please Dymma, and the amorous prince declared to Kieran that he would give up Brunecha if the cry of the stork should wake him the next morning ; now it was midwinter, and the snow was falling in dense flakes. Yet, with the morrow, there was no snow in the city ; the storks were perched on the roof-trees, and their cry awaked the prince. Brunecha returned to her cell.‡ But Dymma still loved her ; he soon came in pursuit of her. This time the saint was more severe. Brunecha was struck dead ; the city, with the king's palace, were given up to the flames, his young son perishing in the conflagration. Then Dymma bitterly deplored his fault. But when he had sufficiently bewailed it, and when he was sure of his heart, Brunecha returned to life. The legend of the Bollandists says no more ; but who will believe that Kieran did not restore to the contrite prince, son, and city, and palace ? The name of the saint was invoked ; the castle, the child, and the city were saved ; the legend of Kilkenny affirms it ; it ought to know best.

The naturally tender heart of the Irish saints had

* Vita Kierani, (Bolland.)

Vita Kierani, (Capgrave.)

† Id.

compassion then for the weakness of the heart, especially on those whose vocation and state did not bend them to an entire and superhuman perfection. Some of the greatest and purest had had their moments of trouble. Others, before entering the narrow way of the church, had followed the broader way of the world. They had half seen the illusions, the enchantress forms, that, flitting by the wayside, tempt the traveller, and misleading, hurry him into the snares of the evil one. At Driim-Aird, Aidus accepted the penance of a guilty nun.* Elsewhere, to wrest a daughter of the church from her ravisher, he condemned her to die; perhaps she was not innocent. But when the ravisher had done penance, Aidus would not have the virgin pay so dearly a fault already atoned. She revived and lived. The good saint, become a bishop, remembered, doubtless, the somewhat rash adventures of his youth; he pardoned as he corrected. Finally, remarkable, surely, and rare fact, women were equally merciful. Thrice, for example, Mida beheld virgins of her sisterhood fall; thrice, with the same charity, did she raise the fallen ones, or patiently await their repentance.†

To judge the conduct of the saints, to appreciate their severity, or their indulgence, we must consider what was passing around them, and what were Irish manners and morals in their day.

The most charming qualities of woman—and this is, perhaps, one of the most delicate mysteries of moral life, and the salvation of souls—are closely linked with their most dangerous weaknesses. What is most seductive in them; is, at the same time, so dangerous, that

* Vita Aidi, (Colgan.)

† Vita Mide, (Colgan.)

we know not whether to hate or love. Good and evil were not more intimately united, more sublimely mingled, in the very fruit whose substance was the essence of good and evil. Now, if, on one side, considering the impetuous and sensitive nature of this poetic race, the passionate liberty of the state in which they then lived, and the privileged beauty, of which it offered the most elegant and perfect models, we may conceive the irresistible torrent that would bear away the sons and daughters of Erin, — on the other, reading these voracious legends, we must infer that they often were carried away. The examples which they give can be reckoned indeed, but still they are pretty numerous. What, then, would it be were we reading the history, not of Irish sanctity, but of Irish weakness?

We are here to give this difficult history; it will suffice for the subject to gather from the lives of the saints some characteristic traits; they will, perhaps, aid us to understand what the saints had to do.

"How long wilt thou thus remain living with us, without using thy marital rights?" asked two Irish women of their common husband.* "As long," he replied, "as discord prevails between you." Some time after, as he heard them still quarrelling, he left them, and finding a bark on the sea side, he went to a little island, where he lived so long that the hair of his body made him a garment as thick as the down of birds; and Brendan, who had seen him, found him happy. We can see here only an unfaithful allegory; and not all the husbands in Ireland would have envied this life and plumage. Moreover, polygamy is not a school of mo-

* Vita Brendani, (Capgrave.)

rality; and in the most refined harms, graces, not virtues, are found. Let us then leave St. Brendan and his doubtful story.

"One of thy comrades, whom thou dost not mistrust," said Columbkille to Goreus, one of the most valiant men in Ireland, "shall cause thy death." "Perhaps some one of them seeks to kill me," replied Goreus; "or else my wife, for love of some younger man, will kill me by witchcraft."* But perhaps Goreus was jealous; perhaps he even slandered his partner. And then would his example, and others, too, prove that the Irish women were addicted to adultery and witchcraft?

Dympna was the daughter of a pagan king. The queen died, and her father every where sought a woman to succeed her. None was fair enough. Dympna alone could replace her mother; this was announced to her. Prayers, menaces, presents, love, and fury, all were employed; all were useless against the now Christian princess. But flight did not save her; her father followed her to Brabant, where, in a fit of fury and despair, he slew her with his own hand. But this story has quite the air of a Brabançon invention. And then, what would it prove against Irish princes?

Yet, if we gather all these traits; if we consider that in that country natural children mixed with the legitimate family, and shared in the inheritance; if we consider that, counting merely among the most illustrious saints, Comgall was born of incest, Aidan of a sacrilege, Albeus of adultery, and Fursey of a weakness, it must be avowed that all these facts, added to those already given, become most significant.

* Adamnan, Vita Columbe.

† Vita Dympane-Messingham.

Bridget herself, the saint among all the saints, pure among the purest,* was the child of an unlawful love. Brosecha was in the house of Dubtach, and the master was seduced by the fair qualities of the slave. Dubtach's wife, seeing Brosecha's condition, asked her husband to sell her, lest the unlawful issue should conspire against her own children. Dubtach long refused, for he loved his slave; and when he sold the mother, he would not sell the fruit of her womb: a magician had foretold to him that that fruit should be glorious.

Here we see one of the causes, and at the same time the strongest proof, of the corruption of manners in Ireland; slavery implies prostitution, being at once the saddest and best excuse for it.

Christianity intervened in the midst of these disorders. When the magicians had been succeeded in the ancient assemblies by bishops, and customs by canons,—above all, when the new dogmas and precepts had sunk into men's minds by the preaching and example of an innumerable and zealous church,—as minds became enlightened, manners became more sound. How this reform was prepared, how this regeneration was effected, what mixture of solicitude and firmness, severity and indulgence, were employed by the apostles and spiritual guides of Ireland, we have been enabled to see, and may judge.

There are traits of character and signs of race that nothing can destroy; they may be purified, but not effaced. The vivacity of the imagination, the sensibility of the heart, the adoration of beauty and grace, like grace itself and beauty, may survive mad and evil pas-

* *Ultan, Vita Brigide.*

sions ; and the delicate instances of an elegant and poetic race appear in the purest parts of the Irish legend. Mida fell asleep ; during her slumber a luminous atmosphere encircled her ; it was divine love thus rendered visible. On her awaking, her countenance shone with an angelic beauty ; never before had her beauty been so resplendent ; never again was it seen so ; and yet, adds the narrator, Mida was very beautiful.* Almost all the virgins whom Ireland honors were beautiful. When Bridget was of marriageable age, they wished to give her a husband ; to escape the love of men, she sacrificed her beauty. But when she took the veil, and the peril was past, she recovered it.† It would seem that the holiest of virgins, the patron of Irish women, should blend in her sanctity and grace all the virtues, all the powers, of woman, all her delicacy, all her instincts.

The charm of these sweet countenances does not trouble the church, and adorns the calendar ; there is neither use nor merit in disfiguring the saints, and to make them ugly is certainly a devotion that cannot be particularly agreeable to them.

All legends have not these attractive scenes and personages of the Irish legend ; they have often forgotten to paint them, or neglected to embellish them ; sometimes they have fairly sought ugliness.

If we study Irish manners in the rest of her legend, we do not find that the saints there had much less to do. The legend is not history ; but when, after reading the biographers, we consult the annalists, we recognize what we had caught glimpses of in the *Acta*, the features, and physiognomy of the people, whose moral and

* Colgan, *Vita Midee*.

† Ulster. *Vita Brigidee*.

social existence histories relate more at length, but not better..

We know what Ireland's organization was. It formed but a single family, sprung from Heber and Heremon. Their stock, with a power of multiplication not yet exhausted, had thrown out its vigorous shoots on every side ; and the whole island was soon covered with its branches. The chart of the Irish monarchy was a great genealogical tree. The individual belonged to the family, the family to the clan, the clan to a great tribe, the tribe to a nation, which was the great and true family, having abroad no affinity, no alliance. In the nation all the clans were kindred, in the clan all were brothers. Such a constitution would be the best, had it not been the worst in barbaric times. This universal and perpetual solidarity, which, in another state of things, would be all-powerful for good and peace, then, on the contrary, became the solidarity of evil, of violence. Family wars and enmities are cruel, because they are unnatural ; they are inextinguishable, because hereditary ; they multiply and extend, as the family, without separating, extends and multiplies.

The Irish people were then, in general, a great, barbarous family, in a state of intestine war. We may imagine the violent, bloody passions, the fierce manners, which such circumstances must have created and developed. Amid virtues and miracles, contemplative recollection or evangelical labor, we hear in the legend the din of war, we see the conquered or the victims fall, the conquerors or assassins pass on with their chant of triumph. Some lives even are living pictures of this stormy history ; and the life of St. Findan, for example, is the truest, most curious, and, perhaps, most absorbing,

chapter of Irish history, at the time of the Norwegian and Danish invasions. The apostles, moreover, and the bishops who succeeded them, rushed of themselves into this conflict; and we have seen their ardent zeal, their energetic action, their frequent and decisive intervention. We find traces of it in their legends, and we have thus had glimpses of scenes of murder, oppression, and crime. And others, too, could be counted.

One day that Columbkil was seated, with his disciples, on the banks of the waters of Ce, and a bard, who had been conversing with them, went his way, one said to the saint, "Why did we not ask Coronan, before he left, to chant us some noble poem?" And Columbkil replied, "Why do you hold such vain discourse? Could I ask the wretched man for a joyful chant—ask it of one whom death has already overtaken?" In fact, as the saint uttered these words, a man who had just crossed the stream cried out, "The bard who was talking to you has just been killed on the road by his enemies."*

Mida beheld two fratricides perpetrated almost before her eyes.† A furious father pursued his daughter; he was going to assassinate her in the arms, under the mantle, of Diaconus, the venerable master of Columba. To arrest him, Columba had to strike him dead.‡

These savage scenes troubled the repose of the calmest retreats. "Come no nearer," said Fanchea to Endeus, "for thou art stained with blood, and the life of a man."§ And the saints, in the depths of their peaceful solitudes, amid their meditations or evangelical conferences, felt their serenity troubled when their prophetic

* Adamnan, Vita Columbæ.

† Vita Midæ, (Colgan.)

‡ Adamnan, Vita Columbæ.

§ Vita End, (Colgan.)

thought presaged the bloody tumults, of which those now pure spots were to be one day the theatre. "O Comgell," cried Columbkille, sadly, "this little fountain, from which we are now drawing, — the day will come when it shall no longer be fit for man's use, so thick will it be with human blood; for here the men of thy race and mine shall meet in battle, and one of mine shall be slain, and his blood, mingling with that of others, shall flow into this fountain and fill it to the brim."

What part did the saints fill in this violent and troubled state of society? We know already. They rushed between enemies, and through unchained passions, preaching peace, reconciling enmities, arresting vengeance, defending the weak, taking in hand the cause of innocence, snatching the victim from the executioner, separating armies, arresting invasion, opposing the gospel to the sword, persuasion to violence, or else, when need be, the omnipotence of good to the power of evil, the invincible force of supernatural power to the excess of human power.

This is not all: these are but isolated facts, individual acts; this is especially only the active and direct manifestation of their influence: now, this influence acts still, and, perhaps, more efficaciously, in an indirect, and, so to say, a passive manner, by example and contrast.

Christianity, in fact, with its pacific brotherhood, its spirit of charity, humility, pardon, and patience, offered a strange contrast to the fraternity of arms, the right of war, the law of vengeance, the spirit of pride — in fine, all the principles of Irish society. Ireland, thenceforward, seemed divided into two peoples, two societies, two

*. Adamnan Vita Columbe.

worlds — the world of the church and the legend, the world of the clan and history; on one side, darkness, with the clash of arms and the din of battle, the angry voice and cry of murder, the tumult of unchained passions, and the outburst of barbarous transports; on the other, in a light of undecided, but serene transparency, gentle looks, the silence of recollection, or the harmonious murmur of prayer, the simplicity of evangelical actions, and the sweet expansion of charity.

Happily, the light did not tend to keep aloof from the darkness, but, on the contrary, to enter and dissipate it, bearing with it the quickening and virtue-giving atmosphere that the saints already breathed. Gerald, the Cambrian, has transmitted to us a story that bears the look of an allegory.* Ireland had no bees — such is a tradition, true or false, that goes back to ancient times. St. David then directed in Britain, that great school where so many glorious disciples were formed. Men-dubdauc came from the depths of Ireland; and during the long years of his stay, the many hives, Menevia's riches, were confided to his care. But when the time came for him to return to Ireland, the bees would not leave him. Thrice did he bear them back to their cells; thrice did they cluster around him, and follow him to his vessel. Then the brethren and the holy abbot allowed him to depart with them. The bees of Menevia prospered in their new home; their honey was ever as sweet, and the Irish forests were soon perfumed with their honeycombs.

The real bees of Menevia were, according to a common expression in legendaries, the saints formed by

* Topog. Hiberniæ.

British masters, who came back to Ireland laden with the sweet treasures of Christian lore and Christian charity ; and the honey which then, for the first time, perfumed Erin's woodlands, was that spirit of tenderness and grace that the gospel there exhaled.

Amid those explosions of wrath, those fierce hearts, ever playing with life and death at their sword's point, amid that ever reeking blood, new sentiments arose, beneficent, restorative ; the spirit of preservation and love met that of hatred and destruction. It was a universal and expansive love, extending in its effusion to all, enveloping in a kind of noble brotherhood all creatures, all the works of God. For to love and respect the creature was also to love and respect the Creator.

This comprehensive tenderness ; this sympathy for all that lives and can suffer ; this immense charity of the gospel, that seems to dilate at will and envelop the world, is found in all legends, in the heart of most saints. It is a kind of pantheism, but a pantheism which respects human dignity, and exalts, instead of debasing ; which enlarges and ennobles duty, instead of suppressing it ; which consecrates the order of nature, instead of confounding it ; which quickens, moralizes, poetizes, and hallows the relations of man to other beings ; which makes man's heart and soul the heart and soul of nature, and which gives humanity a charming part and a touching ministry ; it is Christian pantheism, the pantheism of charity. These amiable instincts so foreign to the bosom of barbarous society, but acting so powerfully on it, this touching and wholesome exaggeration of charity, which spares beings devoid of reason and loves them, the better to teach man to spare and love man, are marked at every page on the

Irish legend, and are manifested by traits of quaint simplicity.

"I hope," said Columbkille, one day, "I hope that this steel which I bless, may never be the instrument of harm to any creature." That same day, the hallowed knife was thrice tried, and thrice refused to shed the blood of an inoffensive beast.*

Kiewin, during the days of Lent, had retired to a solitude, where, under a narrow cabin, which scarcely sheltered his head, he remained in prayer or ecstasy, motionless, his arms raised to heaven; birds flew around him, and came with equal security to repose on his arms, or the branches of the neighboring trees, less motionless than himself. One of them, says the popular tradition, came and placed in his hand the first twigs of the nest which she prepared; when the saint perceived it, he would not trouble the young mother's labor; he waited in prayer till summer came and the young birds had flown.†

This goodness manifested in stories or allegories is not disclosed only by marks of accidental sensibility. This protection was more extended and more durable; it covered the whole species, and was perpetuated after the death of the saint; it opened, amid the plains and forests, vast asylums, where hunted fowl and timid deer might rush for refuge;‡ where none would dare to pursue them, none could with impunity reach them. Universal peacemakers, enemies of all violence, adversaries of all oppression, they would, doubtless, have fain restored between men and animals the compact established by God in the days of primitive innocence. Hence

* Adamnan, Vita S. Columbe.

† Topog. Hiberniæ.

‡ Id.

those singular associations, those adventures that excite a smile and furnish a poet's theme.

Kieran's first disciple was a terrible wild boar, that he found by his fountain Fuaran. When the cell arose, the disciple worked at it with all his tusks and all his strength. A fox, a badger, a fawn, and a wolf, came to the same school ; all profited more or less. The fox, a wily beast, inclined to evil, one day forwent his good purposes, plunged into the depths of the forest, and joined his comrades. " Why, brother, didst thou commit this action ? " asked Kieran, when he had brought him back. " It is unworthy of a monk. The water that we drink here is pure, and we share it as our sustenance ; and if, according to your nature, you wish to eat flesh meat, God would have enabled us to find it in the bark of these trees." The culprit did penance. In all these names of animals we may see names of men ; in these beasts, corrected and subjected to rule, we may see an allegory. But legendaries are not fabulists ; their narratives are full of such stories ; we can see in them only the simple marks of a benevolent sanctity, an ingenuous faith, a charity full of effusion. It seems that every creature may be good, and should be happy.

Simple souls, easy hearts, ears open to every call, moved at every danger, feeling for every want, ever yielding to the impulse of charity, they did not always even take time to consult their conscience, or foresee the disadvantages of their benefits. Some robbers are pursued ; they invoke Kieran, and escape.* Where is justice ? A woman is poor ; Aidan gives her an ox ; but the ox was not his. What will the owner say ? Wolves are

* Lect. Offic. Kieran.

hungry. Aidan gives them his master's sheep.* What will his master say, and what will the sheep say? A miracle comes in ; the robbers become monks ; another ox comes out of the sea ; the devoured sheep come back. But this is, perhaps, tempting God, and forgetting human laws.

We must not press the legend too closely. What we must see in it, what it attests, is the spirit of mildness and benignity in the saints ; the tenderness and effusion of their charity. Sentiments before unknown were revealed to Ireland, and the spectacle of this beneficent clemency in the church must have awakened, in the depth of souls which were a prey to the passions of barbarism, the better instincts of human nature, and the sweet virtues of Christian civilization.

What fruits did the church of Ireland finally gather from that land thus energetically turned up, thus laboriously cultivated and watered with so much sweat, solicited with such perseverance and love? The saints, according to Patrick's advice, had been for it at the same time, by their burning zeal, their unctuous and penetrating charity, the sun and the dew. Did it respond to their efforts and their hopes? We shall see hereafter.

What we can now say, what we have seen, is, that the work at its outset presented a magnificent appearance. If the toil was ardent, the laborers might, too, promise themselves an abundant harvest. Faith is the root of all religious virtue ; where it germs we may count on fruits of salvation. Now, it seems that in the outset, in this vigorous virgin soil of Ireland, it was planted with

* Vita Aidan, (Capgrave.)

singular promptness and energy. It must have appeared immediately that it would surely be lovely, immortal, perhaps, and indestructible, so simple, strong, and upright was it.

"I will not make the trial with thee," said Lasran to Munnu; "for we know that if thou saidst to Mount Marge, 'Go to Legh-Lene,' and to Legh-Lene, 'Take the place of Marge,' on account of thy sanctity and thy labors, God would at once do it for thee." * Aidan, like another Elias, sent his disciple with his staff, and the dead arose. A man came to ask his intercession for his sick mother; but as the saint was going, the mother died. The man came back, thanking the saint for his charity; but that it was now too late, his mother was dead. "Go," said Aidan, "and tell thy mother to come and meet me." The man returned, and told his lifeless mother, "Arise; Aidan calls thee!" and his mother arose.†

In the presence of such a faith, we can scarcely doubt Ireland's vocation. Erin, for her own part, never doubted herself, — simple trust, in which we find, perhaps, at once the pride and simplicity of a half-civilized race, unsuited to refined or doubtful virtues, and whose mind could not yet separate the dignity of man from the dignity of the Christian. The saints of Ireland believed, without difficulty, in the sanctity of others; they also believed in their own; and not to speak falsely, it would seem, voluntarily avowed it. We have met more than one example; we shall, doubtless, meet more. Sometimes, even, they seemed to acknowledge that they were not indifferent to the honors which sanctity confers.‡ Speaking of Dage,

* Vita Munnu, (Usher.)

† Vita Aidan, (Capgrave.)

‡ Vita Dage, (Colgan.)

whose future and labors he foretold, St. Mochtheus said, "He will do wonderful works ; and among other things, will make the chase in which my relics shall be preserved." St. Senanus, a week after his death, at the moment when the monks were chanting the last psalms, and were about to close his week's mind, arose to mark the day on which he wished his memory to be honored.*

If perfect sanctity be that which is self-ignorant, we must avow that the venerable personages of the Irish calendar do not all attain perfection. But in default of this difficult ignorance, this perfect virtue or supreme grace of humanity, we must ascribe to them an inferior, but still rare and often difficult merit — sincerity.

They had, then, not merely the faith, but faith in their faith. This self-reliance was, perhaps, useful, and doubled their strength. They followed with more energy the spirit whose presence in them they felt so clearly, and they followed where it led, with the unshaken assurance which power and success give.

* Vita Senani, (Id.)

CHAPTER XII.

THE IRISH CHURCH AFTER ST. PATRICK.

"WHAT wilt thou give me in exchange for what thou askest?" said an Irish chieftain to Bridget. "I will give thee, if thou wilt," she answered, "everlasting life, and the sceptre shall ever abide in thy race." "I seek not," replied the chief, "a life that I know not; and for those who come after me I care but little. Grant me rather two other things; that I may remain many a long year in this present life, in which I delight, and that I may be victorious in all my wars." *

Such was not, happily, the general feeling of the Irish people, and Patrick's word had sounded to the depths of their souls. "Ireland," says Evinus, "that was seated in the shadow of death, at that voice which called it to life, arose and saw a great light." There was a quick, wondrous touching bound of these delivered souls towards life, light, and liberty.

This bound must necessarily stop or relax; condemned never to reach perfection, human works and humanity itself approach it only to diverge from it, and like the asymptote and the curve, recede farther in proportion as they have been nearer. The apostle knew this well. In a prophetic vision, Ireland had appeared before him; it was bathed in liquid light; its plains, its mountains,

its valleys seemed illumined with an envioning and all-penetrating flame ; then its dazzling brightness paled, and only the headlands, with their summits, seemed sparkling still ; then the mountains grew dark, and scattered gleams shone feebly in the depths of the valleys.*

This is the image of Irish sanctity ; these are the three epochs of her history, the three orders of her paradise. The third is holy, the second more holy, the first had been most holy.† The first had the glory of the noontide sun ; the second shone with the sweet pale light of the moon ; the third shone like the stars.

This poetic and figurative expression does not reveal all the secrets of the Irish church ; and in the thousand narratives of the legend we find only rare and confused indications. Patrick left disciples after him ; he left numerous schools and learned masters ; and yet it seems that grave things took place in that church, that it experienced shocks violent enough to shake its very structure.

"There were, at that time," says the Abbess Hildergarde, in her history of Disibod, "there were great troubles in Ireland, a great schism and great scandals. Some attacked the Old and New Testaments, and denied Christ ; others embraced heresy, many fell into Judaism, and some relapsed into idolatry ; there were even some who ceased to live as men, to lead the shameful existence of brutes."‡

To this testimony we must add that of Animosus. Bridget was one day transported in spirit to Rome. "I

* Catalogus SS. Hiberniæ.

† Id.

‡ Vita Disibod, (Surius ;) but this foreign authority is of little value.

call God to witness," she said afterwards, "that I was in Rome in the basilica of St. Peter and St. Paul; there I heard mass, and I ardently desired to see the order and rule there observed, introduced into this country." And she sent wise men to Rome, who brought back the ritual of the mass, and various ecclesiastical rules.*

On its side, the Catalogue of the Irish saints acknowledges that the saints of the second order received the mass from the Breton saints, David, Gildas, and Doccus.†

Finally, according to the history of St. Gildas, when he came to Ireland at the prayer of King Ammeric, almost all the inhabitants of that island had lost the Catholic faith. "All," says the author, resuming, "all had lost it, from the least to the greatest." ‡ The monk of Rhuy, however, evidently exaggerates. According to Usher, § it was Bridget who called Gildas to the aid of Irish Catholicity and Christianity. She who reformed the worship, || and who chose bishops, the daughter and heiress of Patrick, held a place exalted enough, had authority enough, for saints and doctors to respond to her call.

Nor were Columban's words more true when he wrote to Pope Boniface, "We, Heberians, are all disciples of Peter, Paul, and all the disciples, receiving nothing beyond the evangelical and apostolic doctrine. Not a single Jew, a single heretic, a single schismatic has been seen among us. And the faith of the apostles, such as

* Animous, Vita Brigide.

+ Catalogus SS. Hibernie, (Usher.)

‡ Vita Gildæ Sap. (Mabillon.)

§ Usher, Antiquit. Eccles. Britann. 905.

|| Animosus, Vita Brigide.

we have received it from you at first, we hold it ever by tradition, and nothing has shaken it."*

Does not the very letter in which he speaks thus, belong to the history of that great quarrel which so long and deeply troubled the insular churches, proving the source of so many spiritual and temporal evils to the Irish and British churches, and was not Columban the boldest, warmest, most indomitable champion of the Irish cause? The separation and struggle had been declared in Bridget's time, and Gildas could not check it. Columban revives them; the assembly of Legh-Lene resulted only in dividing Ireland more completely; and Rome required ages for her calendar and tonsure to triumph perfectly.

After Columban, the troubles seem to have aggravated. Fursey addresses to the Irish church severe rebukes. "The wrath of God overhangs all who despise his warnings; but he is especially angered against the princes and doctors of the church. They prefer the world to God, and temporal interest makes them neglect the salvation of souls."†

St. Kilian, according to the author of his Life, went to Italy to imbibe near the Holy See the pure doctrine of the Christian religion, and obtain permission to preach, for Ireland had been infected with the Pelagian heresy, and condemned by an apostolic censure, that could be absolved from but at Rome.‡

Without pursuing this inquiry further, without calling the Irish church to account for the obscure heresies of Sampson in the eighth century, for the opinions of John

* Columban, *Epist. ad Bonifacium P. P.*

† *Vita Fursei*, (Mabillon.)

‡ *Vita Kiliani*, (Surius;) of questionable authority.

Scotus in the ninth, for certain individual errors promulgated often far from Ireland, and never disseminated there, we see that the life of that church has had its alternations, its trials, its day of weakness.

The three orders doubtless represent well the church of Erin ; but it is the church triumphant and crowned ; beneath it ever in struggle, and sometimes in distress, in a tumultuous arena, full of enemies and dangers, battled the church militant ; and if many after the victory went to assume their places in the glorious hierarchy, many, too, were lost and succumbed.

These calamities, these errors, these deceived or deceiving doctors, these incompetent or faithless pastors, Patrick and Bridget had foreseen and announced. "Most holy virgin," said Patrick, one day, to Bridget, "why hast thou slept at the word of God ?" * Bridget humbly knelt. "My father, and most holy lord, pardon me ; while I slept I dreamed. I, thy handmaid, saw four ploughs furrowing the whole surface of Ireland ; then sowers sowed the seed ; the harvest grew up and ripened ; streams of new milk filled the furrows. Then I beheld other ploughs, and husbandmen that were black ; they cast down the good harvest, and swept the keen ploughshare over it ; they sowed tares, and the furrows filled with muddy water." "Holy virgin," then said Patrick, "the vision that thou hast seen is wonderful and true, and this is the explanation. We are the good husbandmen ; with the four Gospels we open and fructify the hearts of men, and make the milk of Christian doctrine flow in streams. But towards the end of the world, evil doctors, in combination with all

* *Animosus, Vita Brigidæ.*

the wicked, shall come and destroy our doctrine, seducing almost all souls."

At the end of the century, and not as the holy apostle understood it, at the end of the world, but at the close of the very century in which he brought the gospel to Ireland, at the moment when Patrick was taken from his church, trials began. When the arm that had raised up Ireland and had upborne it for sixty years with such wonderful power, was withdrawn, Ireland reeled; but it did not fall; Gildas and Bridget sustained it; then Patrick's disciples gathered close around them, and made an energetic effort. The British aided the Irish schools; Nennius at Lancarvan, David at Menevia, Doccus at Nancarban, seconded the efforts of Olcan at Clunderclain, Mochteus at Lugdmagh, Gildas at Armagh, and Finnian at Cluain-Eraird. Formed by them, a new generation took the place of the former, whose work and traditions it, at the same time, resumed; the epoch of the second order of Irish saints began.

In the time of St. Patrick, a twofold movement began in the Irish church, within and without. Within it constituted itself, elevating and regulating its monasteries, opening and organizing its schools, founding and governing its abbeys and bishoprics. It acted already without, and began to send to foreign lands its pious and tireless travellers; its anchorets, who sought solitudes; its pilgrims, whose curious faith loved to visit the spots consecrated by holy recollections; its learned scholars or masters, who wished to diffuse science, or imbibe it at the most plenteous or renowned fountains; its missionaries, in fine, whom an apostolic instinct impelled to nations still idolatrous or but half converted.

This twofold movement, prolonged during the first centuries of the Irish church, concentrating, so to say, its life and history, is represented by three great names — St. Columban, of Hy, or Columbkil, St. Columban, of Luxeuil, and St. Brendan.

CHAPTER XIII.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE MONASTIC MOVEMENT IN IRELAND.

"BEHOLD the day of gladness ; the clerks applaud and are in joy, the sun of justice, which had been hidden in the clouds, shines forth again."*

Thus does the encouraged church chant the return of light. There had been, as it were, an eclipse ; during these passing shades, confusion and trouble had entered men's souls, and the church doubtless experienced a moment of uncertainty and anguish. But at the first ray, Ireland woke to a new life, and her labor, suspended for a moment, was resumed with more ardent activity. When the new masters arrived on the barks that bore them from the Cambrian schools, Erin stood on the shore, impatient and restless ; when they entered the country, they were followed, not by troops, but by armies of disciples ; when they stopped, it was to found, not a monastery, but a city. One would have said that now the Irish people were ceasing to be a nation, to become only a church ; that the clans and the five kingdoms were going to unite in a vast abbey, with Finnian and Columbkil for successive abbots.

The names of those who gave rise to this great movement and guided it, have remained glorious, and their memory has been celebrated in chants which display, amid the gratitude and admiration of the church, that

* Hymn in the Office of St. Finnian.

kind of maternal and poetic love, the sweetest homage it can offer to saints on the day of their triumph. "On the lily has bloomed the rose, whose leaves the spring has reddened; Erin is embalmed with it; men come from afar to breathe its perfume. There the mystic bees suck in honey and bear it to their homes. O Falcia, thou hast borne a wondrous flower; whoever presses his lips to it, heals both soul and body."*

What names in the legend are Comgall, Fintan, the two Brendans, Munnu, Moctheus, Lasrean! What power during life, what glory after death! And yet we have met, and yet we shall find still greater! How many more have been illustrious in the church! doctors speaking to thousands of hearers, abbots governing nations of monks, solitaries astonishing the world by their virtues and their miracles! We know them not in our day. Yet they were radiant in their own, and will ever shine forth in the lost space of the Irish legend, as shine the stars whom the motion of time and the heavens has borne far from us and hidden from our eyes.

If the legend counts by thousands the disciples of these great masters, it is by hundreds, too, that it counts the monasteries erected by each. Why enumerate them here? Learned men have drawn up the sacred geography of Ireland; they have collected every name, marked every vestige: could they have restored all the ruins, assembled all the relics, and reanimated all the dead, Ireland would appear to them as she does in the legend, bristling with churches, covered with cells, peopled with saints, resounding with bells and symbols, echoing amid the chant of psalmody. What more do we see in the legend? The heavens opening above the Irish soil; be-

* Colgan, Hymn in the Office of St. Finnian.

tween heaven and earth souls taking their flight, angels ascending or descending, luminous columns marking the most glorious abodes, and golden ladders resting on clouds to reach paradise. If history does not relate all these wonders, it declares, at least, how monastic Ireland was, and we must ask no further testimony.

Five masters taught spiritual life and founded rules : Patrick, Kieran, Columbkille, Comgall, and Adamnan. "These," says Alcuin, "are the illustrious fathers of the Irish church, the masters of life and manners." The author of *St. Kieran's Life* names eight, as founders of orders : Patrick, Bridget, Brendan, Kieran, Columbkille, Comgall, Molass, Adamnan. These were the highest, for nothing was more varied, more free or more mobile, than this religious society. Every hive formed its swarms, which soon multiplied and colonized in turn ; and each of these republics could change its constitution and laws. Each solitary made his own rule ; if disciples came, the cell became a monastery, the founder a legislator.

All these institutions resembled each other, doubtless ; they had the same starting point, the same goal, and the same means of attaining it. They gave a shorter or longer time to contemplation, prayer, mortification, manual labor, study. They were more or less severe. When the limit seemed passed, the wiser protested ; Fintan's rule was too hard, so was that of Moctheus ; but charity stepped in, and the master lightened, in favor of the weaker disciples, a burden that they could not bear. Moctheus alone practised his rule exactly ; * and Fintan received this admonition from heaven : "Sustain thy

* Colgan, *Vita Fintani*.

combat to the end ; but beware of leading others into error or scandal, for one clay is weaker than another." The spirit of these rules is found in the monasteries founded out of Ireland ; and on seeing that drawn up by St. Columban, we may infer that they were in general very severe. Yet they remained unchanged ; five centuries after, the masters had relaxed nought of their rigor, the disciples nought in their obedience. Let us hear Marianus relate the fault and the penance of Amnechad. While he was in Ireland, at Iniskeltre, some fathers came one day, whom, by permission of his master, Cortram, he entertained. After the meal, as they sat by the fire, they asked him for a drink. He refused, unwilling to do so without permission ; but finally allowed himself to be overcome, taking care first merely to send his master the first fruits of what he offered his guests. The next day, Cortram having asked him what had happened, Amnechad told him all, and was at once ordered to leave Ireland. He went to Fulda, immured himself in a strait stone cell, and after spending long years there, died.* In punishing thus, Cortram doubtless had in his mind, perhaps, Colman, that martyr of monastic obedience in St. Patrick's time, who died rather than quench his thirst before the time appointed by his master. Tigernach, in his turn, related the story of Amnechad to Marianus, when reproving him for a slight fault, and it was on the very tomb of the holy penitent that Marianus spent ten years as a recluse. Thus were traditions, rules, and examples transmitted ; thus was sanctity perpetuated.

Rules and monasteries might extend and multiply at

* Marianus Scotus, Chron. an. 1043. *

case, Ireland belonged to them ; it seemed, at least, that that great country, with its deep forests, its swarming rivers, its isles and loughs, was a new, free world, open to the nomad life of errant saints, and to the stable foundations of those who fixed themselves on the soil and established colonies. Land surely was not wanting in Ireland ; and the monasteries often seem to have the right of first occupant to the ground where they were founded. Often, too, in Ireland, as elsewhere, they were endowed by the generosity of the owner, too happy to see rising on his hereditary domain a holy house, from which would gush, in other days, an endless fountain of spiritual and temporal blessings. .

These pious travellers were to be seen traversing Ireland, seeking the spot marked out by God for their rest and their resurrection. Sometimes, where they stopped, the crowd would assemble in too great numbers ; they set out for calmer retreats. At other times, it would happen that the monastery only changed inmates. Munnu had been five years living at Heli when Kiera came with her virgins. The monk who was guest master welcomed them ; but Kiera sent him to Munnu. "Go, tell the servant of God," said she, "to give me a place where I may serve God with my daughters." Then Munnu said to his disciples, "Brethren, this is not the place of our resurrection ; let us leave it to the virgins of the Lord ; we will leave them, too, the fruit of our toil, taking only what we need on the way, our office books, the chapel service, our daily vestments, and two oxen to draw our chariot." At a subsequent day, Tell, the son of Segen, came in his turn, and succeeded Kiera.*

* Vita Munnu, (Colgan.)

Sometimes, too, the people were wicked, and drove out the man of God. Thus Mochtheus had to leave his monastery of Lismhor, and bent his way to Lughmadh.* But by Lismhor meandered a stream that Mochtheus loved, and, like Mochtheus, it could find its way; beneath the surface, by secret turns, it followed the saint's steps, and when Mochtheus stopped at Lughmadh, he beheld his cool stream of Lismhor gushing forth at his feet; on its banks arose that famous school that sent out three hundred priests and a hundred bishops.

A powerful and unseen magnet seemed from the depth of these holy abodes to be attracting souls, so quickly did they fill up. Many came from afar, to seek rest for a weary heart, or lore for the thirsting mind. Many, too, would be passing the gate, reckless of retirement and salvation, when grace would take them on the way. One day, Fergna traversed the plain of Liffey. Fintan went towards him, and, kneeling down, implored him to leave the world, and assume the monastic habit. "I have," said Fergna, unaffectedly, "twelve sons and seven daughters, a beautiful and beloved wife, a people living under my rule in peace and plenty. I cannot part with them, and I love them." "Return to thy home," said Fintan, "and I will pursue my path." Fergna went his way; but the words of the saint had sunk deep in the princely heart; and, a few days after, he abandoned all that he loved, to live with him in Christ.†

At another time, men passed by, chanting their war songs, and bearing aloft the grisly heads of their foes.‡ "Amid these shouts," said Fintan, "I mark the voice of an innocent lamb; it is Kieran, son of Tulchan."

* Vita Mochtei, (Colgan.)

† Vita Fintani, (Colgane)

‡ Id.

And Kieran went no farther ; he entered the monastery, where he was to live and die.*

When, in the depths of a solitude, Aidus found two holy men, two elders, seated under the hoary trees of the forest, reading and expounding the gospel, exchanging, in the sweet and religious silence of the wild-wood, the grave words, the profound thoughts of wisdom, is it wonderful that his heart was touched ? And when those old men rose before him, and announced to him in the language of the saints and prophets, that God had set his seal upon him, and that angels already walked beside him, is it surprising that his soul was thenceforward seized by the mysterious spirit of contemplation and asceticism ?†

Then those ecclesiastical festivals, whose pomp and whose simplicity even can have so strange an effect, — those processions, that traversed Ireland, chanting the Psalter, — acted on naturally religious souls, and drew with them those whom grace had already prepared. One day, says the Life of Mochudda,‡ the holy bishop Carthag came to the valleys of Mainne. There Mochudda kept his flocks. The bishop, on his way, was chanting versicles of the Psalms, alternating with his companions, and Mochudda, hearing their psalmody, was seized with the Holy Ghost, left his flock, and followed the bishop to the monastery of Thuaim. There, while the bishop was received into the guest chamber, Mochudda remained without, unknown to any one, either Carthag or the rest. Meanwhile, Moel Tuili, Mochudda's master, seeing that he did not return, sent out after him ; and when they found him, and brought him before

* Vita Fintani, (Colgan.) † Vita Aidi, (Colgan.) ‡ Vita Carthag. (Id.)

his master, Moel Tuili asked, "Why didst thou not come back last night, my son?" "Because, my lord," he replied, "the divine chant that I heard those holy clerks chanting ravished me; I never heard men chant so; and they chanted all along the way, and in the house, too, till it was time for sleep; even the holy bishop, after all the rest, far into the night, was chanting still. My lord, I would fain go with them, to learn that beautiful chant." Moel Tuili was touched at this simple vocation, and the boy was offered to St. Carthag.

But these naive vocations were none the less irresistible; the young souls, whom Christian music and poetry had gained, were sometimes chosen souls, sublimely heroic. Mochudda was Carthag's beloved disciple; and the day when the holy bishop, after having instructed him, brought him back to the hearth of Moel Tuili, a scene occurred, often met indeed in the history of the church, but singularly expressive in its Irish simplicity. Mochudda had become the most worthy disciple of the master whose name and virtues he was to copy. He was a priest. Carthag, with him, bent his way to Leamhna, and when they reached Forann, where Moel Tuili was, he presented Mochudda to him. "Here is," said he, "the son that I received from thy hands. He has studied, he has learned the divine books of the Scriptures; I have conferred on him the dignity of the priesthood, and the grace of God already appears in him by many miracles." "What shall I give thee for thy reward?" asked Moel. "I ask," replied the old man, "that thou offer to this young servant of Christ thyself and thy race after thee, forever." But Moel would not, on account of Mochudda's youth. Then the venerable bishop, bending down, bent his knee before his disciple,

saying, "Behold, I offer myself to thee, and to the Lord, myself and all my church, forever." Seeing this, Moel prostrated himself, humbly vowing himself and all his race to St. Mochudda.

Such was, then, in Ireland, the prestige of science and sanctity ; such could be the power of those who, in the sixteenth century, were still always styled, with respect, "the sons of good doctrine."* Such were the privileges of the church.

That church, moreover, that great monastic society, must have been intensely popular and sympathetic to Ireland. Theirs was not a confined church, excluding the sun and the air ; it was wide and open. It was not an exclusive caste, an arrogant or ambitious corporation, but an immense confraternity, admitting all individualities, all associations, provided they were truly Christian ; and these individualities, these associations, were not perpetually in suspicion, or at war with each other. They lived openly ; they moved freely ; and in this life of motion, this almost nomadic life, liberty could scarcely be stifled — that evangelical and truly moral liberty which respects while it directs man's will. In fine, ever flying men, and ever seeking them ; seeking, in cloister and desert, prayer, study, ascetic thoughts ; returning, amid their own, to share in the sufferings, the interests, the sentiments of one and all, of the family, the tribe, the Irish nation, — the monks remained men ; they were more Christians than monks, uniting to the personal and abstract merits of ascetic sanctity the substantial virtues and social qualities which are, too, a sanctity, less purified and less fruitful,

* Stanihurst, *De Rebus in Hibernia gestis*.

less angelic and more human, less near to heaven, but more useful and sweeter to earth.

This picture is, perhaps, an ideal ; this perfection is, perhaps, a miracle, to be added to all the rest. The monks of whom we speak are the monks of the legend ; and we find, at least, in the legend all the features and colors which form the painting.

The monks then loved their rule and their cloister ; they had tender friendships ; they loved their kindred according to the flesh ; they loved their native land.

"I confess to thee, father," said a monk to St. Fintan, who had questioned as to the cause of his melancholy, "I confess that I grieve at the absence of my brother according to the flesh ; and I beg thee, in the name of God, to let me go and see him again, and not die of sadness." "Be of good heart, my son," said the holy abbot, gently ; "thy brother will come back, and this very day thou shalt wash his feet, for his heart could find no repose away from us."

In the same monastery two other brothers had lived from childhood. The elder died, and while he was dying the other was laboring in the forest ; when he came back, he saw them opening a grave in the cemetery, and thus he learned that his brother was dead. He hastened to the spot where Fintan, with some of his monks, was chanting psalms around the corpse, and asked him the favor of dying with his brother, and entering with him into the heavenly kingdom. "Thy brother is already in heaven," replied Fintan, "and you cannot enter together, unless he rise again." Then he knelt in prayer ; the angels who had received the holy soul restored it, and the dead man, rising in his bier, called his brother. "Come," said he, "but come quickly ; the

angels await us." At the same time, he made room beside him, and both, lying down, slept together in death, and ascended together to the kingdom of God.*

In these marvellous and mystic stories, all the ideas, all the sentiments, take the allegorical and brilliant form of the miracle. But under these graceful or quaint forms of monastic imagination we behold humanity; and we love to see the genius of the cloister idealize and sanctify the sweet affections in man's heart, instead of uprooting or blasting them.

Thus, too, is expressed, at every hour of their lives, in every page of their history, the love which the Irish saints bore the men of their race and their native land. This ever-ready beneficence, this ever-active protection, their power lavishing miracles and multiplying relief as quickly as need multiplied, whence came they? From charity, doubtless; but at the bottom of this evangelical and universal charity there is a patriotic and national sentiment. When we see how in Britain, and in the depths of Cambria, they protected, defended a menaced independence, a conquered nationality, we see the energy they will display to save the liberty of Ireland. Patrick had obtained of God that his country should not be condemned to bear the law of a stranger. Kieran offered up the same prayer.† Others, after them, asked the same;‡ yet no one then menaced the Irish soil; but it seemed as if these patrons of Erin had secret fears and sad forebodings, and that the spirit of prophecy, rendered more lucid still by love of country made them

* Vita Fintani, (Colgan.)

† Vita Kieran, (Colgan.)

‡ Vita Endæ, (Colgan.)

foresee, in the distant future, invasion, conquest, and foreign oppression.

Such were, in the second epoch, the saints of Ireland; such are the traits which, incessantly recurring in the legend, compose their physiognomy and character. They will be found in him who rules this whole epoch, and seems to be its most complete and most brilliant personification, the ideal expression of monastic perfection and contemplative serenity.

Before speaking of Columbkil, and relating his legend, there are some traits to be pointed out; one scene to be detached from the general history of monastic life in the sixth century.

CHAPTER XIV.

ENDA AND FANCHEA.

It would have been doubtless surprising, — it was perhaps impossible, — amid this generous independence, this liberty of mind and heart, for women not to be raised from that kind of excommunication which St. Patrick had reluctantly pronounced. In the vast religious and monastic movement that made Ireland a blooming Thebais, where, in every forest, and on every road, errant doctors, nomadic monasteries, travelling anchorets, and pilgrims in search of pious adventures, constantly crossed each other's path, how could they always avoid the sight of women, avoid meeting and conversing with them? for they, too, had their abbeys, their schools, and their cells; by separating them from the holy men, they had not cut them off from holiness. They formed a church, and that church was like the other — numerous, active, agitated, moving. In the neighborhood of the holy anchorets lived anchoresses no less holy; the companies of virgins following their spiritual mother, and seeking the place of their repose, passed beside troops of disciples, journeying with their masters; the convents opened indifferently to the brethren and the sisters that sought hospitality; and sometimes, as we have seen, the saints who, on the eve, had offered this hospitality, took up, in the morning, their staff for a journey, leaving their weaker sisters the house which they had built,

the implements they had fashioned, the fields they had cleared.

We accordingly find, here and there, traces of the Christian relations, the happy associations or influences, from which the holiest and firmest men, the greatest and most respected women in the church, might gather, without danger and without scandal, sweet and useful fruit. It was a pious hermitess who counselled Columban to leave Ireland,* thus sending to Gaul and Italy that great master of religious science and the monastic life. More than one saint, like Colman,† formed his youth under a woman's discipline; and when we come to speak of the schools of the Irish church, we shall have to remember these skilful mistresses. Their pupils, become abbots or bishops, preserved a holy and tender affection for those whom they called their nurses; Colman left the Island of Hy and Columbkille to visit Rethna.

Brendan had been brought up by Ita; and when he returned from his voyages,‡ he went to recount them to the holy woman, who received him in her arms and tenderly clasped him to her heart. He consulted her; if she called him, he responded to her summons and fulfilled her orders. Nor did Lughtigern and Lasrean pay her less striking homage.

The life of Enda§ and Fanchea gives us the entire history of one of these austere and mystic alliances. When Fanchea, at the threshold of her monastery, arrested the headlong course of Enda, he had just shed the blood of a man. "I hold the heritage of my father," said he to the holy woman; "I must meet my enemies in battle."

* Jonas, Vita Columbani.

† Vita St. Ita, (Colgan.)

‡ Id.

§ Vita Endæ, (Colgan.)

"Thy father is in hell," replied Fanchea, "but his sins and his crimes are his own." Then Enda, dissembling his thought, replied, "If thou wilt give me, as my spouse, that maiden of royal blood whom thou art bringing up, I will do thy will." "Thou shalt ere long have my answer," said she. Then entering the chamber where the young maiden was, she asked her whether she wished to love Him whom she loved, or whether she preferred a spouse according to the flesh. The young maiden, having answered that she would love him whom Fanchea loved, "Come, then," said the saint, "and rest a moment on this couch." But when the maiden had stretched herself upon it, she expired. Meanwhile, Fanchea covered the face of the departed, and called Enda. "Come, young man, and see the woman whom thou hast desired ;" and, entering with him, she uncovered the face of the maiden. "Behold her whom thou hast desired." "She is no longer beautiful ;" he replied ; "she is too pale." "And such wilt thou thyself be," rejoined the saint. Then she spoke sternly to him of the pains of hell, the joys of heaven, and converted him.

Enda became Fanchea's disciple, and assumed the habit. He toiled, he labored, he directed the workmen in the erection of the monastery. His old comrades came to seek him. Fanchea had made the sign of the cross against them, and they remained motionless, riveted to the earth. But one day, the men of Enda's race came, in pursuit of robbers, to the gates of the monastery ; a battle ensued, and the instinct of family and of war revived in the heart of the monk. Already was he arming and hastening to the relief of his kindred. "Enda," cried Fanchea, "lift thy hand to thy head, and forget not that thou hast assumed the crown of Christ."

Enda, touching his shaven head, remembered that he was a monk ; his hand dropped the weapon, and he sat down in his cell in peace.

Then it was that his spiritual sister advised him to shun these temptations, and leave Ireland. "Go to Britain, study humbly at the feet of Manchen, in the great monastery ; when the renown of thy virtues reaches here, it will be time to return."

One day some pilgrims from Rome passed by Fanchea's monastery ; they were asked of the famous saints in different countries. Then they spoke of a saint of Irish birth, called Enda, who directed a monastery, and whose virtues were precious before God. Fanchea, with her heart full of joy, resolved to go and see her brother ; she took with her three of her companions, cast her cloak on the sea, and the fragile raft, borne by the winds and waves, steered to the British coast. For a moment, however, the hem of the cloak seemed to sink in the sea. A slight infraction on Fanchea's directions had been committed by one of the virgins, and this unseen weight bore down the wondrous craft.

But Enda, now become an abbot, now great in the church, far from the sweet traditions of Irish fraternity, had also become sterner. When the four travellers reached his convent door, Enda informed his sister that she could see his face without hearing his voice, or hear his words without beholding his countenance. Fanchea preferred to hear him. A tent was pitched, and Enda, veiled, conversed with her. He promised to revisit Ireland. He did, indeed, return ; and he it was who founded the eight monasteries which divide the Island of Arran. But we are not told that he ever saw Fanchea more. Had he banished her from his mind, or has the legend

forgotten the end of this long friendship, at once so tender and so austere? Could it be that, at the hour of death, at that hour at least, Fanchea would not deserve to have her body blessed and buried by him whom she had served and loved in the Lord, and that Enda did not grant her what other saints did not refuse women who had withal served and loved them less?

Sometimes, too, the idea of St. Patrick was realized in the bosom of the church. The law of divorce, which he had pronounced, had then its happy exceptions. Sentences pronounced against women could scarcely be absolute; they are never without appeal; and in the land whose history we are writing, amid the circumstances that we have described, the instincts of union, confidence, and love, more than elsewhere, prevailed over rules of distrust and separation.

CHAPTER XV.

COLUMBKILL.

IF the church pays homage to all the merit that honors her, if she has chants and prayers for all saints, there are some, nevertheless, of whom she seems to keep a livelier remembrance, of whom she ever speaks in chosen words. There are virtues that come home to the heart; the serenity, meekness, tenderness of contemplative souls, the mystic perfections of the cloister and solitude awake in her a more profound sympathy, a secret predilection; and this sentiment is disclosed anon in the animated or excited language of her hymns, or in the expressive beauty of her style. "The snow-winged dove," says she, speaking of the Irish saint,* "the rosy-necked and brilliant dove, has sought the tops nearest heaven, far from earthly mire; there has she built her nest, on the rock of penance; and there, by the Word of grace, she has begotten her little ones, beloved by Christ, and faithful to him; there she is unceasingly mingling her melodious chant with plaintive moans."

Criomthann, as he was styled at his birth, was indeed the dove of the cloisters, and the name of Columbkill was only the figured expression, the poetic image, of a sanctity, where the monastic order of Ireland soon became idealized with the characteristic traits of its sanctity and its legend.

* Office of St. Columbkill, Abbot.

He had long been promised to Erin. "In the last days of the century," had Maveteus said, "a child shall be born, who will be called Columba, and whose name shall be famous in all the isles of the ocean; the last years of the world shall all be enlightened with his glory, for he shall be dear to God, and of great merit before him."* Patrick, himself, beheld him in the future, and foretold him to his people. Conall had just received his blessing, when his younger brother, Fergus, came up in turn. The holy prelate first prayed, then blessed him, laying his hands on his head long and with great devotion. The elder brother, seeing this, was surprised and afflicted; and Patrick, perceiving the cloud on his brow, consoled him. "I have blessed thy brother," said he, "on account of the blessed son who is to be born of his race; for his son Fedhlemir will beget a son who shall be called Columba, because, from his mother's womb he will be filled with the spirit of God. He shall be rich in the treasures of science and wisdom; he shall be a shining light in his generation, and will merit the title of prophet of the Most High."† A little later, too, he marked the spot where Columba should make his abode. "Arriving at the banks of the Boëlle," says Jocelyn, "as the river was wide and deep, and there was no bark, he prayed, and the river opening, left him a passage. Under his blessing, the waters divided so that it became fordable, and at the same time the fish multiplied at that spot." When Patrick's disciples expressed their astonishment, "In a great many years," said he, "a son of life shall be born, and be called Columba; he shall dwell here, and these prodigies are wrought in his favor."

* St. Adamnan, *Vita Columbæ*, (Migne's *Patrol.* vol. lxxx.)

† Jocelyn, *Vita S. Patricii*.

At the moment when Bridget was to be withdrawn from Ireland, which she consoled for Patrick, by reflecting, so to say, the light with which Patrick had enlightened her, Columbkil was born.

A little before his birth,* an angel appeared to his mother, and placed in her hands a veil of wondrous beauty, radiant with the hues of every floweret. But ere long, escaping from Aethnea's hand, the mysterious veil unfolded, opened, and soaring heavenward, spread wider and wider, floating in gentle waves over mountain and valley, covering all in its wide folds; and as Aethnea mourned that she had not kept it, the angel said, "Be consoled; a son shall be born of thee; all virtues shall shine in his soul, like the flowers in the web of this beauteous veil, and he is predestined by God for the salvation of many souls."

The angel Axal was given as a guardian to the predestined child; † signs often revealed God's designs, and the presence of angels; ‡ flames hovered around his head as he slept, and lit up the house of Doire Ethne, where his first years were spent.

Son of a prince, he was hurried to the field of combat; but he was protected by Axal; and even then God had sent to him three divine virgins, who appeared to him one day, to excite in his soul a pure and mystic love: Virginity, Wisdom, and Prophecy. When the appointed moment for his vocation arrived, he went about seeking the lessons of Ireland's holiest masters. Finnian of Maghbile, Gorman, Finnian of Cluain-Eraird, instructed him. Yet then it was that that sanctity,

* Cumm., Vita Columbe.

† Officium S. Columb., Abbatis.

‡ Id.

already so advanced in perfection, was humbled ; a synod excommunicated him ; the fault with which he was reproached was slight, and he was innocent of it.* When, then, he appeared before the severe judges who had condemned him, his innocence, in the eyes of the holiest, was mysteriously revealed. Brendan, the founder of Birr, arose, and fell on his knees. " You have despised the man of God," he cried ; " I have seen a halo around him, and angels attending his path."

At Dor he formed his first disciples ; but his fame and his zeal already radiated over all Ireland ; numerous miracles already revealed in him the rival of the greatest saints, and the heir of St. Patrick ; for to him was it given to find and bear, in his turn, the apostle's book and cymbal. Then came the battle of Cule-Dreibne. Columbkille set out for Great Britain, and landed on the Island of Iona, where he was to abide and found his great monastery. There rose beneath his hands that monastic city which so promptly became the religious capital of the British isles, of Albanian and Pict, Anglo-Saxon and Irish. Thence soon he acted on all nations. Among the Albanians and Picts† he converted the pagans, confounded the magicians, and consecrated kings. For the Anglo-Saxons he prepared bishops to announce the gospel to them, and found churches in their midst. In Ireland, recalled by princes and people, who sent him a deputation of their most illustrious saints, he created numerous monasteries, where, under his discipline, so many thousands came to learn the spiritual life.

Thence he overlooked what passed in the four king-

* *Cumm., Vita Columbae.*

† *St. Adamnan, Vita Columbae.*

doms ; and from this interior view, this second sight, with which God had endowed him,* he constantly, and without effort, was present at most distant events and accidents ; † his glance passed seas and traversed continents, reaching to the very centre of Italy. His soul and his thought dilated, and the world, with its continents and oceans, lay before him, clear and manifest ; he seized it at a glance, as it were in the rapid light of a sunbeam. Such was that second sight of the saints, already explained by St. Gregory, ‡ and possessed by a small number of the elect preferred by God.

Thus he assisted Aidan amid the shock of battle ; thus he followed, with watchful eye, with thought and prayer, the traveller on his way, the mariner in the wanderings and perils of the seas. He beheld the waves arise in the distant tempest, and sea monsters rise from the abyss, to menace the vessel. "Cormac," said he, "seeks a solitude, but he will not find it yet." "Prince," he said, on another occasion, to a British king, "many of our brethren are about to land on the Orcades : commend them to the prince of those islands ; thou holdest his hostages." For if his eye was open and penetrating, like that of Providence, like it, too, Columbkil was beneficent. His soul was moved at every danger and every woe ; when men beheld his countenance turn pale, or red, or veiled, it was because, then, in some lost spot of Erin, in the depths of some monastery, there was a pain to relieve, a man to save, a slight sorrow sometimes to alleviate. "What afflicts me, my son," said he to Diermid, "is, that I see Laifran making my monks work

* Baithen, Vita Columbae.

† St. Gregory, Dialogues.

‡ St. Adamnan.

§ St. Adamnan.

hard, and yet they are very weary." But peace soon returned to his countenance ; for rapid as was the glance of the saint, or charitable as his thought, had an angel flown and remedied the evil, the heart of Laifran had been changed, and the brethren reposed beneath the shades of Dair-Maigh. Another monk, far from there, was engaged in building a church ; he loses his balance and falls ; but from Iona Columbkille had seen him, and the alarmed monk feels himself supported in an angel's arms.

Columbkille was not, then, merely the father of monasteries, that is to say, their creator ; he was, too, by his solicitude and his love, the father of his monks. Can we wonder if they responded to that paternal care, that tender watchfulness, by ardent homage, by truly filial piety, and that they made him the purest type of monastic perfection and cloister rule ? When he landed in Ireland, tribes were in commotion, monasteries agitated, anchorites left their cells, the church herself felt her heart bounding within her, and he had to traverse the great island borne on the shoulders of his monks, so serried was the multitude around him.*

Who, after that, could ask the detailed account of his virtues, his ascetic exercises, prayers, genuflections, fasts, mortifications of every kind ? His whole life is the heavenly manifestation of his sanctity, the permanent glorification of his perfection. So with his legend ; human virtues and sanctity, we may say, disappear ; prophetic revelations, miracles, heavenly apparitions, fill the three books of Adamnan, and the whole history of Columbkille. For him transfiguration took place this side

* St. Adamnan.

the tomb, and the vision of heaven was blended with that of earth. He did not ascend to heaven, but heaven descended to him.* Then followed ineffable colloquies, superhuman outpourings, revelations like those of Patmos; for three days and nights an uncreated light inundated the retreat in which he was enclosed; chants were heard, chants unknown, ravishing, which the choirs alone of the new Jerusalem will one day repeat. Then were opened to him the secrets of the Scriptures, the abyss of creation, the mysteries of the divine work. Why, at these moments of grace and initiation, when the eternally closed book of sovereign science half opened its pages, when God, by the outpouring of his predilection, forgot that he condemned man to ignorance, why was not Baithen, the faithful disciple, near his master? Why did he then wander, tossed and retained by the winds on the waves of a distant sea? What a sublime book he would have written at Columbkil's dictation! a new Apocalypse, as marvellous as that of the apostle St. John, clearer it might be.

If Columbkil chanted with the angels the hymns of heaven, the angels, in their turn, kept silent, and they bent when the holy man uttered the hymns which the spirit had inspired him. When the envoys of Gregory came to Rome, bringing back the great hymn of Columbkil, the holy pope wished to hear it; and when the envoys began, he beheld angels ranged around, and bending, eager to hear it. Gregory, troubled, rose also. It happened that the travellers changed some strophes,—the angels immediately disappeared;† but when the

* St. Adamnan.

† Colgan, *Appendix ad Vit. Columbæ in Triade*.

chanters recovered the sacred words of that grave and profound poesy, then the divine auditors reappeared, and Gregory rose again, seized with religious awe.

Yet this angelic life was but a mortal one, and the term of his pilgrimage approached ; already even he had once touched the limit at first set by the divine will ; already the angels descended to meet him. Columbkil beheld the gates of his new and happy country open, and his visage was for an instant lit up by the first rays of true beatitude. Then the angels stopped, waited ; then they ascended to heaven ; the luminous doors closed. The afflicted churches had besought God to leave Columbkil among them yet a while, and God had granted it. Columbkil sighed ; there was a delay of four years.

This mystery was concealed from his disciples ; it was not revealed to them. Amid all these accounts, where transfigured humanity preludes the immaterial, pure, and splendid existence of immortality, a graceful and human scene took place. Columbkil, moreover, remained a man amid all the prestiges of his superhuman life ; and he at least preserved the heart's most delicate sentiments and dearest affections. Thus he loved his country. When he had to leave it, he left it not without a sad and heavy heart, and the remembrance which he cherished of that land which his eyes could half see, but which was long closed to him, was sometimes revealed by touching expressions.

"Hear me," he said, one day, to one of his monks ; "at the third hour of the day, thou wilt go and sit at the western extremity of this island, on the sea shore, and thou shalt wait. Towards the ninth hour thou shalt see a stork come from the north of Ireland, drawn in by the wind in its eddies, and hurried far from her path ; she

will be weary, and thou shalt let her fall before thee almost exhausted on the shore. Arise, and bear her to the nearest house; for three days and nights give her hospitality; treat her with great care. At the end of three days she will have recovered her strength, and will remain no longer with us; she will return to sweet Ireland. I commend her to thee, brother; for she comes from my native land." And when the monk had fulfilled his mission, and the traveller had flown, Columbkil thanked and blessed him.

The time at last approached when he was to leave his disciples and that Isle of Iona which had become so dear to him, and his disciples, who knew it not. He returned to the monastery, — Adamnan relates it, — and sat by the way side where the stone cross arose. And while the holy old man, enfeebled by years, took a moment's repose, his white horse passed, the old and docile servant that had for many a long year borne the milk to the monastery. He approached Columbkil, bent his head towards him, and God, who can give unreasoning animals feeling and knowledge, doubtless taught him that he would never more see his master, for he began to moan, and two large tears fell from his eyes on Columbkil's breast. The one who led him, seeing this, wished to drive him away; but the saint checked him. "Leave it," said he, "for it loves me and shows me its grief. Thou who art a human creature, and hast a reasonable soul, wouldst have known nothing of my speedy death, had I not revealed it to thee; and God himself has revealed it to this irrational creature." Such were his words; and as, after that, the horse, that good servant, went sadly away, he blessed it.

Thus he continued to the end, uniting the sentiments

of angels to the sentiments of man, the sweetest privileges of human nature to the mystic privileges of the heavenly substances, the most delicate affections of the heart to grandeur of mind and thought.

He died in his island amid his brethren, and the cloister alone celebrated his obsequies. His monastic life was to have as monastic a close. Columbkil was to expire at the foot of the altar, on the steps of the choir, amid the chant of psalmody. Thus he died.* At matins he entered the church before his brethren; when they came, he raised his hand to bless them; his countenance smiled to the angels, who doubtless surrounded him, and bore away to heaven that long since blessed soul.

The church was inundated with light, embalmed with celestial perfumes. From the very depths of Ireland, Lugaid saw the Island of Iona all wrapped in a luminous atmosphere;† but, around the isle,‡ the sea had raised its billows, and, as long as the obsequies lasted, no one could approach that land where the church was shut up in prayer.

It will be remembered that Columbkil forms, with Patrick and Bridget, the glorious triad which stand supreme in the Irish calendar.

* *Cunam., Vita Columbae.*

† *Cunam., Vita Columbae.*

‡ *Adamnan, Id.*

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SAINTS AND THE POETS.

WHEN we read in the legend the history of Ireland and her church, we seem to be transported out of this sublunary world to a world above, where the spiritual perfections of an evangelical race and the marvels of Christian fairydom are unfolded at ease. Poesy and sanctity reign together there; there they dispose of humanity and nature, and there their power realizes the strange destinies, which, according to certain cosmogonies, are reserved in the high spheres of heaven to creatures become at once purer, more powerful, and more happy.

Christianity has, by conscience and reason, conquered civilized society; but by the imagination, especially, did it captivate ruder nations. No race ever surpassed the Heberians in lively sensibility, brilliant imagination, prompt passion, impulsive humor; none was more poetic. Ireland's imagination was converted and became Christian long before her reason and her conscience. From the first, a sympathy was declared, an alliance established between poetry and the faith, and this intimate, fruitful, and happy union is deeply impressed in the whole legend.

The Irish harp is coeval with Ireland; music and poetry have in all time chanted in her romantic valleys, amid her assemblies, by the firesides of her poorest

cottages.* Druidism adopted them; the fileas formed, beneath the draoi or draouis, a caste whom love of the arts and respect for religion environed with a twofold honor; and when the Druids vanished with the faith they taught, the bards, immortal as music and poetry, remained; they continued to constitute, amid the nation, an illustrious college, the depository of history and national tradition; the inspired caste was perpetuated in every tribe, and beside each Irish chieftain stood his bard, who received from his father, and transmitted to his son, the harp and poetic inspiration. They accordingly always formed a numerous and influential class in the country.

The Druids do not seem to have made a long or serious opposition to Christianity. As for the bards, their resistance was apparently even less; and poetry, betraying the old religion, her ally, passed from the outset to the banner of the new faith. One of the most illustrious bards, Dubtach, when Patrick appeared before Laogaire, was, in the whole vast assemblage, the only one who honored the apostle and rose to greet him. Pheg or Fiech, his best disciple, followed him; Macfil was next converted, and then the gospel had, in Ireland, its poets and popular chanters.† The aid was immense. Habituated to chant warlike and hospitable virtues, they celebrated in hymns and canticles, which rapidly spread in every tribe as they passed from mouth to mouth, repeated on every harp, in assembly and banquet, by the wayside and under the roof tree, the

* McGeoghegan, *History of Ireland*, p. 36. Ware, *De Hiberniæ Antiquitatibus*, 31. Stanihurst, *De Rebus in Hibernia gestis*. Giraldus Camb., *Topog. Hiberniæ*.

† Probus, *Jocelyn, Vita Patricii*.

story of the gospel and Christian virtues, the power and history of the new God, the menaces of hell and the promises of heaven. They spread the name of Patrick and glorified him; after chanting of chieftain and the battle's shock, they sang of the greatness of the new prophet, his supernatural power, the miracles of grace or wrath that his word had accomplished, what docility might hope for, and what obstinacy had to fear. Patrick was known before the gospel, the miracle outstripped the preaching of the truth, imagination led the way for faith. What matter? Patrick soon arrived; the nations were ready for baptism; if the neophytes were not learned, they were enthusiastic, and in matters of faith enthusiasm is more worth than science.

Hence those poesies, of which Fiech's Hymn was doubtless one of the first models; thence that hymn of Columbkil, as marvellous as that of St. Patrick; and so many others, which the Irish chanted or murmured when they were in the thick of fight, when they passed by night the camp or ambush of the enemy, when fire devoured or threatened their homes, when their bark rolled or reeled beneath the tempest's shock. Thence that glory which so soon environed the names of the saints, that power which they owed at once to the ascendant of their sanctity and the prestige of a popular renown. These hymns, composed by popular poets, and for the people, were in the Irish language. Down to our times few have been translated. It is not for us, then, to dwell on them; it is enough for us to state their existence, and the effect that they must have produced.

Nor are we called upon to criticise this popular music or poesy. Gerald Barry speaks of the music with enthusiasm; it was the only talent which he admitted in

the Irish. "Never," says he, "have I seen music as learned ; it is agreeable, sonorous, and sweet in even its quickest movements." He admires the incredible agility of the hands, the notes which hurry on and mingle in a thousand harmonious torrents, the melodious accord of the base and the highest notes, the measure exactly observed in this lively and complicated music, the finished art with which the musician conceals the difficulties and hides his very art.* Yet Gerald had seen France and Italy ; let us add that he wrote in the twelfth century. Stanihurst, who wrote in the sixteenth, is more severe towards the Irish musicians, and he would fain have us believe that in his time they had preserved, of their artistic traditions, only a quick self-love, and a sometimes dangerous susceptibility. They had, perhaps, degenerated. But Stanihurst still attests the singular power that the bards had preserved. "To be celebrated by them," says he, "is an immortal joy ; to be attacked, on the contrary, is a torture and an agony. The Irish can bear every thing ; they are patient ; but not one will you find content to gnaw the bit of infamy.† If such was, at the close of the sixteenth century, the power of opinion on men, and of poets on opinions, what was it ten centuries earlier ? And what allies must not the missionaries of the gospel have found these bards and poets ?

The saints of Ireland were, moreover, too Irish for this alliance, to have been merely politic on their part. They loved the harpers and chanters, because they loved music and poetry. This sympathetic fraternity, of which

* Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topog. Hibernia*.

† *De Rebus in Hibernia gestis*.

we have seen many traces, is found in a thousand narratives, and as an example in the history of the fileas of King Aengus. Seven of them were surprised by their enemies and killed. Their bodies were flung into the deep waters of a neighboring lake, and their harps suspended on the trees that overhung it. Aengus was overwhelmed with grief, and he informed Kieran of all that had happened. The saint repaired to the borders of the lough, and, in the presence of the waters, whose calm depth had enshrouded seven homicides, beneath the branches where sighed the forsaken harps, he fasted and prayed. As the fast and the prayer were prolonged, the waters descended; then the bodies of the seven fileas appeared. Still Kieran fasted and prayed; and then the seven fileas arose, and taking their harps, they began, in the presence of the people, the king, and the bishop, the sweetest chant that they had ever sung.* But the saints did not merely love the harp and verses, and those who could make them heard; more than one abbot, more than one bishop, could awake the sounding chords of the national instrument; more than once their harp followed them in their travels, and their relaxation was to draw from it sweet and pious strains. Is not Keiwin's harp preserved? In Gerald's time it still wrought prodigies.

If such is the Irish race, that is to say, eminently poetical,—if such was the sympathetic alliance contracted, from the first, between the saints and the fileas, between the new religion and the ancient national and popular poetry,—we cannot be astonished to find poesy deeply impressed in the history and monuments of the Irish church.

* Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topographia Hibernie*.

There is assuredly in Christianity a great and immortal poesy. Not only is there poetry in the vastness of its conceptions, the pure spirituality of its dogmas, the sublime mysticism of its latest aspirations ; it manifests itself also in the mortal sphere of human art, by creations and works of a superior order. In the liturgy, for example, it has found admirable inspirations and powerful effects. But this beauty of the hymns and prayers of the church (not to speak of the Hebrew part) is rather musical than literary ; it is in the harmony of the chant, not in the poetry of the words. This is a characteristic fact, of which it is, moreover, easy to find an explanation ; but it seems incontestable. The Irish liturgy, with a few rare and doubtful exceptions, does not seem to have escaped the common law.

But every where else, throughout the whole legend, we find united in close alliance the evangelical thought and the Irish imagination, poesy, and sanctity. Hence that Christian poesy, that Catholic magic, that miraculous mythology, that poetic ecstasy and asceticism, where the ideal conceptions of an orthodox mysticism mingle with the creations and borrow the forms of the epic and lyric.

This legendary poesy appears in the Irish legend in three distinct forms : the acts of the saints, or the ordinary history of their life, prophecies and visions, narratives of travels. The first is naturally the chief one, or at least by far the most important. The second appears episodically. The third is equally accidental, and rarer.

It is apparently useless to speak of the first here. We have spoken of it throughout ; and this volume, thus far, has been but an abridgment, a reading, so to say, in the lives of the saints. If any thing is wanting,

it is not the poetic intention. Who, then, has curiously gathered, accepted without control, recounted complacently, perhaps embellished or multiplied so many scenes, so many touching or brilliant, graceful or solemn, above all, wonderful accounts? Who, then, not surely created, but perceived, contemplated, understood, loved, painted with instructive care, a secret pleasure, a sympathetic emotion, and at times a happy art, quaint and unconscious though it be, these expressive and powerful, amiable or severe, clement or awful portraits, which resemble each other so, yet differ as greatly, and make the Irish calendar an animated gallery, an assembly of men with a body and a soul, a living church? Who but the poetic genius of Ireland? The soul prayed, the imagination dreamed; faith acted, poetry recounted; in the heart of the church, unperceived by her, a poem was acting and being committed to writing at the same time.

To go back to all these stories, and call out the poetic spirit, would be to recommence this volume, and make it under a new form — a useless labor, that would have the fault of resembling a literary study. The reader's memory will, moreover, do it easily and quickly.

It remains, then, for us to seek in the Irish legend prophecies and visions, narratives of travels. There, as in all that precedes, we shall without difficulty perceive the presence of that poetic spirit, whose breath vivifies or transforms all the sentiments, acts, adventures of youthful Christianity in Ireland, making its history a kind of irregular and confused epic, in which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* follow each other under strange though interesting forms, and where we see already in the germ the works of Milton and Dante.

CHAPTER XVII.

PROPHECIES AND VISIONS.

REVERY, inspiration, enthusiasm, and meditation, contemplation, ecstasy, are analogous terms, which express in an increasing progression two parallel orders of similar phenomena, resulting one in poesy, the other in prophecy and vision. Whether the impulse be spontaneous or extrinsic, whether man exalt himself or a breath from heaven lift him up, be his work human or all divine, there is always an interior fermentation, a burst of the spirit, a ravishment of the soul. Every prophet is a poet, at least in some degree, and, reciprocally, prophecy goes not without poesy; there is not merely analogy of language, but a common origin. Not every man among the Hebrews could learn to prophesy; and the life and rule of the prophets, the discipline of their scholars, would form poets as well as seers—a severe school, doubtless, which should send forth only irreproachable and austere works.

According to certain rabbins, says Calmet, to constitute a prophet required a lively imagination, solid reasoning, enlightened by study; a life spent in purity, aloof from the pleasures of the senses. They prepared for prophecy by fasting, prayer, and the assiduous study of anterior prophets. They lived ordinarily apart from the people, in retirement, in the country, in a community with their disciples, building their own cells, studying

and laboring, but at employments that required no great application of mind or body. Elias went clothed in skins. Isaias wore sackcloth, the ordinary dress of prophets. Presents of bread were made to them ; the first fruits were offered to them as to the poor.

Between the life led by these seers of Judea, at Bethel, on Mount Carmel, at Ramatha, or at Jericho, and the lives led by the countless saints scattered over the islands, rocks, woods, and caverns of Ireland, the resemblance is striking. Ireland was in truth a vast school of prophecy. Nothing was wanting for the spirit of futurity to reveal itself to their gaze ; neither solitude nor recollection, nor meditation of the Scriptures, nor poverty, nor toil, nor fasting and prayer, nor rude attire, nor the lively faculties of the imagination, so active and so easily awakened in all men of their race, nor even the harp of resounding strings, with mordant sounds, with powerful or irritating harmony, which could solicit in them prophetic transports, as it provoked and sustained them in the prophets of Judea.

Thus the most, the greatest at first, and with them many more, possessed, at least at moments, that mysterious intuition, that second sight, which transcends time and space, or rather suppresses them. Prophecy was not manifested in them by a violent crisis, by that trouble of a soul surprised and invaded by a master being ; to penetrate the unknown future, they needed not to tear themselves from the present world. They beheld afar as they must behold from high heaven, and prescience was in them a tranquil anticipation of the science of the blessed. They had not, like the most illustrious of the old law, moments of inspiration and fits of prophecy ; the spirit resided in them, or rather, it was not another

spirit that spoke in them, but their own ; they were true and perfect prophets, or even more than prophets.

This tranquil, and we may say natural view, untroubled by effort, was doubtless surer and clearer. But we may believe that with the prophetic emotion and transport, the movement of the imagination so deeply agitated in the ordinary labor of prophecy, was also exhausted and fell. We may, therefore, find nought in Irish revelations to recall that wild, irregular, breathless, but almost ever powerful and impetuous poesy, which gushed from the soul of the exalted and troubled Hebrew seer. To judge more surely, we must read them. Many were written, and some survive. Jarlath, Bishop of Tuam, had prophesied as to his successors in the see, and his predictions are preserved.* Are they authentic? Ware thinks not. Brendan, son of Findloga, wrote revelations. Who has seen them? In the fourteenth century, Walter Islip collected and published the prophecies of Patrick, Moling, and Columbkil. Are they authentic?† We may well doubt them. Those of Gildas bear far more resemblance to contemporary chronicles than to the mysterious chants of the Bible. But are they surer than the rest? And were they, Gildas was a Briton, and although he lived in Ireland, it would perhaps be wrong to judge Irish prophecy by Breton prophecy. Still less can we speak of the prophecy of Cataldus, found at the end of the fifteenth century, in the heart of Italy, or of the revelations of Bridget, the Swedish queen, attributed erroneously to the thau-maturga of Erin.

The acts do not comprise a fragment which can give

* Ware, *De Scripturis Hibernicis*.

† *Id.*

us an account of the many writings so curious to us now. We must resign ourselves to their loss.

Not so with the visions.

Prophecy was, among the Irish saints, a sort of ecstasy to rise to the highest and most tranquil zones ; according to all probability, it issued in the same time from the domain of poesy. The vision, on the contrary, by virtue of its very nature, was to remain ecstatic, and abide in the poetic spheres of the imagination. There is, perhaps, some subtilty in distinguishing absolutely between vision and prophecy. On the one side, each has, perhaps, its precise definition in theology, and no one for so small a matter would care to become a heretic. But it seems, at least, that they differ, and that one is more elevated than the other by a degree or a sphere, in that ascendent movement that carries the soul beyond this world where man's body and intelligence dwell. A vision is sometimes a revealing of the future, not always ; and that revelation is symbolical, and the recipient may not have the key of the symbol. It is not, then, a fact revealed to the intelligence ; it is a painting drawn, colored, and animated, striking the imagination. Under such figure, revelation is, at least in form, an eminently poetic phenomenon. The divine action is less complete ; and transparent as the truth may be, it is to be seen only through a human veil. The imagination lends her aid, and it is from the human element that the vision derives the poetic element with which it is always more or less strikingly, more or less happily, impressed.

This may be observed even in the visions mingled in the narrations of this history ; they resemble allegories, whose idea is invented and whose details arranged by a fancy not unseldom elegant, ingenious, and brilliant.

We find in them marks, or at least the appearance, of literary composition ; and thanks to this literary element, we find, too, the variety which the difference of individuals and epochs introduces into human conceptions.

Sometimes they are dreams ; the soul, without leaving the habitual state of ordinary sleep, hears voices instructing or commanding it, in language either clear and direct, or more or less enveloped in mystery ; or else God's designs are exposed to its eyes in speaking tableaux, of which it reads the emblematic signs. At other times they are real apparitions, which escape the eyes and ears of the sleep-chained body, but which the soul distinguishes, sees, and understands, through the material veil. At other times, again, prophetic signs and superior beings are manifested to the very senses of the creature. Sometimes, too, the body is abandoned to the inertia of its gross nature, plunged or retained in lethargy or death, while the soul, disengaged for an instant, communicates with the events of futurity or the scenes of another world.

The situation and character of the soul thus enlightened ; the circumstances of the person's life ; the habits of his mind ; the ideas and preoccupations amid which he is ; the habits, interests, studies, even, of his times ; all the influences that he undergoes — may also modify the subject, form, and nature even of his dreams, visions, and ecstasy. The visions of Beanus, for example, an Irishman of Albania, who lived in the tenth century, and whose *Life* was written at the end of the same century, in France, seems to bear the impress of the country and the age. The first is emblematic, but the emblem has become learned ; we might say that Beanus, even in the

vision, remembered the schools,* and that the spirit of the schools is combined with the supernal spirit in composing the allegory.

Kaddroe was to be a saint ; God had ~~so~~ marked him before his birth. But his father and his companions perverted his youth, and he was about to plunge with them into that violent, warlike, and bloody life then led by the Scots as well of Albania as of Ireland. Yet Beanus, a venerable saint, did not abandon him. One day, while Kaddroe was asleep with his companions, Beanus, not far from him, rested his weary limbs. And lo, a virgin appeared before his eyes. Her face outshone the sun ; young as she seemed, her years were many, and she evidently was not of our age. Her garments had seven different forms, and their tissue represented all that words can say, all that the mind can conceive. Long did the aged saint look upon her in admiration ; and, at last he asked, " Who art thou, and whence comest thou ? " She replied, " I am Wisdom ; I abide amid good counsels and learned meditations, and I am come to claim Kaddroe, who belongs to me." And with this she disappeared.

Hitherto we have seen but angels ; here we see the genius of the schools, and the seven liberal arts ; the allegorical figure has replaced the inhabitants of heaven. They reappear in the second vision ; but, instead of one of those rapid, simple intuitions, where the eye became enlightened and expanded to seize heaven and earth, like the lightning's flash or the sun's fast-speeding ray, it is a painting rolled out, a scene developing, a representation detailed and prolonged.

* Vita Kaddroe, (Mabillon.)

He beheld a gathered host of gigantic warriors,* and as he admired them, awaiting some grand achievement, one of them, who seemed more elevated in dignity, came and spoke to him. "The army instituted by the Eternal King from the beginning of the world must be increased. Go," said he, addressing some of his companions—"go, and take the names of some of these sleeping youths; for these must fulfil their career under the eyes of him who commands us. For this has he sent you hither—he who comes bounding over the mountains, leaping over the hills. And show this old man the career they are to run, and the space they are to traverse." Beanus followed them, and he perceived three gulfs that yawned beneath the earth; the two first were deep; the third plunged down a fearful depth, and its width was measureless; but on the other side stretched away a fortunate and lightsome shore; this abyss had to be crossed, to please the immortal chief. As Beanus trembled for Kaddroe, "Fear not," he was told; "they will all pass through with varied success; but he for whom thou art anxious will pass more happily than the rest. Hear, now, the explanation of what thou seest. The first gulf, the first step to take, is the voluntary renouncement of property; the second, the abandonment of country; the third, the practice of the monastic life; and that happy region is heaven, with all its bliss."

The vision, under its different forms, may, then, be a manifestation of incorporeal substances, a revelation of things of the other world, a communication of the orders of heaven, a moral teaching. Interior or nameless voices, allegorical personages, men, angels, devils, all

* Vita Kaddroe, (Mabillon.)

appear and figure there. The demons have, indeed, their part in all stages of this mystic and marvellous action, in almost all the episodes of this legendary cycle, which embraces the history of Irish sanctification. In Christianity, whether dogma, history, or poetry, the evil spirit has his place and part, as well as in the human conscience and human life; and the part that he makes himself is, especially in man's conscience and life, unhappily, too great. The disciples of Patrick, in spite of their sanctity, and Patrick himself, in spite of his glorious privileges, had at least to fight in order to triumph over him. The evil one, on his side, after having struggled so obstinately in Thebais against the heroes of Christianity, could not, without a combat, yield the palm to the monks and virgins of Ireland. He could not, without resistance, abandon to the soldiers of Christ a rich province, a great kingdom, a numerous people, who had so long belonged entirely to him. The war, moreover, between good and evil, between the demons on the one side, sustained by their power, their malice and man's own, and on the other side, men supported by God and his angels, by what is good in them, if any — is not this war in universal, eternal permanence? and is not the whole earth the battle field?

There was then a great war in Ireland, and from Patrick's arrival — before it even — the demons had sounded the alarm. Many a stubborn combat followed, of which we find traces in the legend. Patrick, Columbkil, Ita, Bridget, all the saints, the three orders in a word, that sacred cohort of Christian Ireland, struggled valiantly, gained glorious victories. For Patrick was mistaken when he thought that he had driven from his island forever those evil spirits, as he was, perhaps, mistaken

when he believed that he had assured the salvation of all the children of Erin. The demons returned. Who knows even whether they ever left? The holier Ireland became, the more numerous, serried, animated became their ranks. Did not Comgall and Mochoedoc see them cluster around the monastery? The more monks and monasteries, the more evil spirits also.

The legend has been unable to give us the exact history of this struggle; the demons alone, or the angels, could write it; it has related some triumphs, avowed some defeats, and by grouping these scattered facts, we should form but a scanty Iliad.

It is no easy matter even to mark the character of these stories. Often, doubtless, the enemy became visible; and from the earliest times the Irish learned to recognize him under the forms which he then assumed, either by a wild choice or by a merited condemnation, and which have become almost as popular as dreaded throughout all Christendom. At other times, nothing in the legend indicates a material contest, a sensible manifestation of the enemy, the assault, and the arms used in attack and defence.

This part, moreover, is less important in the Irish than in some other legends. This we have seen in Patrick, Bridget, and Columbkil. Rarely do these loathsome and odious apparitions come to trouble our history. It is one of the traits that characterize the Irish legend and mark its physiognomy. In this country of easy sanctity and natural beatitude, of strong faith and fertile imagination, the sterner features of asceticism are softened or effaced, or rather, perhaps, were softened and effaced in tradition, by the influence of the poetic spirit. When we read the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert,

the Institutions or Conferences of Cassian, we seem to breathe the burning air of the sand, feel the thirst of the desert, suffer the macerations of fasting, and the strokes of the discipline. The devils, irritated by that burning atmosphere, are there made envenomed and wicked, as the animals are fiercer and more deadly; temptation knows no truce, no mercy; it is a death struggle; and we hear at every moment the effort and panting of the struggle. Amid the Irish saints, we seem, on the contrary, to breathe the mild, moist freshness of the Irish streams and valleys; there the elect are from their mother's womb marked with the divine seal; they grow like the lily in the chorus of *Athalie*, and the soul reposes with them in the calm of solitude, in admiration of their serenity, their blessed quietude, and the wonders which their virtue produces, with so quaint a simplicity, so charming a facility. For some, doubtless, the work of sanctification was painful; and in the life of the greatest we find, here and there, traces of austerities and toil that merited perfection; but the Irish imagination has forgotten or extenuated the pain of the combat, the toil of penance, to remember only the triumph and realize the sanctity better; and in advance, on earth even, the saints move in a golden cloud, are environed by the nimbus, and crowned with the halo.

Can we, after this, be astonished to find the demons more speedily overcome, combating more rarely, and resigning themselves more readily to their defeat? Can we be astonished that, among the saints, ecstasy, visions, prophecy, are so easy, and that they pass with so few efforts from the world where they still live to a world in which they live already?

Amid all these half-liberated souls, that lived as much

in heaven as on earth, who scarcely were in the body, and incessantly abandoned it to go to their true and future country, to pass some instants or some hours, and who brought back from these mysterious and ineffable voyages apocalyptic narratives and divine teachings, Fursey, in the different and peculiar circumstances, was singularly favored. We shall not give an anticipated commentary on his visions. Better at first to give a simple and faithful statement, and relate as we translate this curious and authentic legend.*

* Acta Sanctorum Ordinis Sancti Benedicti, 4 Jan. (Obs. præv.) Bedæ Venerabilis, Hist. Eccles.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SAINT FURSEY.

SON of Fintan and Ghelghese, blessed at his entrance into the world, and baptized by St. Brendan, who was Fintan's brother,* announced and glorified beforehand by miraculous signs, Fursey formed his youth in the great school of Cluain-Ferth, and early manifested his sanctity by mighty miracles. Become a master, he founded in the Isle of Rathmath, near the banks of Lough Orbsen,† a monastery, where many disciples gathered around him, among them his brothers, Ultan and Foillan. Then he wished to revisit his birthplace and his parents; and in his father's house occurred the strange things that we are about to relate.

He was sick;‡ his strength was exhausted; his life was despaired of. Leaning painfully on another's arm, he went out, took a few steps outside of the house, and began the evening office. All absorbed in prayer, he was murmuring psalmody, when he felt himself enveloped in darkness; his feet refused to proceed; he was brought back for dead.

After he felt himself enveloped in darkness, he beheld four hands stretched towards him from above, and take him by the arm; and hovering above, four wings white as snow. He descried perfectly the hands and

* Vita Fursei, (Mabillon.)

† Corrib.

‡ Vita Fursei, (Mabillon.)

the wings ; the rest of the bodies of the angels he could see but dimly. When they reached a certain height, he distinguished their heavenly countenances, shining with wonderful radiance ; but in this splendor he perceived no corporeal form. Before him, too, he perceived a third angel, all glittering, armed with a white buckler, and a sword like a flash of lightning. The splendor which they diffused, the harmonious beatings of their wings, the melody of their chant, the divine beauty of their look, filled his soul with indescribable sweetness ; for they chanted, the first intoning, the others taking it up : "The saints shall go from virtue to virtue ; the God of gods shall be seen in Sion." And the chant rose, then descended to the end. He heard also an unknown hymn chanted by thousands of angelic voices, but he could distinguish only one verse : "They shall go forth to meet Christ." All these celestial countenances seemed to him alike ; but the light was so brilliant that the corporeal form was hidden from his eyes.

Fain would he have remained in the world whose splendor and harmony he enjoyed ; but he was to accomplish his human trial, and the angels brought him back ; and his soul, ravished by their chants, knew not how it had returned to its prison.

Meanwhile the night had passed, and the cock was crowing. He heard no more the voices of heaven ; he heard human voices groaning and lamenting. At that moment those who surrounded his body uncovered his face ; a slight flush tinged his pallid cheeks, and the man of God, addressing them, said, "Why do ye cry and make this noise ?" Then they told him all that had happened, how he had died the evening before, and

how they had remained all night long watching beside his lifeless corpse. He arose ; the sweetness and splendor of the angels returned to his mind, and remembering their promise to return, he regretted that no wise man was nigh to whom he could confide what he had seen. In order that the angels, on their return, might not find him unprepared, he asked and received the body and blood of the spotless Lamb. Thus he remained that day and the next in great debility ; but in the middle of the night, about the hour of Terce, as his relatives, his friends, and many of the neighbors were there to see him, the shades came upon him ; his feet grew cold and stiff ; he stretched out his hands in the attitude of prayer, feeling with joy the approach of death ; for he remembered the delightful vision which had already been once announced to him by similar signs. He fell back on his bed, overcome by sleep, and he heard the frightful clamors, as it were a great multitude calling upon him to come forth. But opening his eyes he saw only the three angels standing beside him ; the noise and the sight of men vanished ; he already enjoyed the concerts and beauty of the angels. The one on his right hand said, " Fear not ; thou shalt find a defence."

They bore him off ; the roof of his dwelling disappeared beneath his eyes. He passed through the howls and yells of the demons, and he heard one of them say, " Let us go and join battle before his eyes." On his left he saw a dark whirlwind, where horrible countenances writhed, and ranged themselves in battle before him ; for as far as he could see, the bodies of the demons were black and frightful, inspiring horror with their long, disproportioned necks, their wretched ema-

ciation, their large, round, deformed heads. When they flew or fought, he saw only an undefined, sinister shadow. Who but knows the frightful forms that the unclean spirits can assume to terrify a soul? Moreover, their features were hidden from him by the dense darkness, as those of the angels by the intense light.

The demons fought, darting fiery arrows; but these were extinguished against the heavenly buckler, and the enemies fell before the face of the armed angel. Yet he would reason with them, saying, "Arrest not our steps, for this man has no part in your perdition." But the adversary protested, and said, blaspheming, that God was unjust in permitting sinners to escape damnation, when it is written, "Not only those who do evil, but those who agree with them that do evil, are worthy of death." And the angel contended, and the holy man thought that the noise of the combat and the clamors of the demons were heard all over the world.

Satan, overcome, like a crushed serpent, lifted up his venomous head and said, "He has often held idle discourse, and he cannot without expiation enjoy bliss." "If thou findest no capital accusations," replied the angel, "he shall not perish for such slight faults." Then the old accuser said, "If you forgive not one another, my heavenly Father will not forgive you." "When has he done vengeance, or whom has he injured?" replied the angel. The devil said, "It is not written, 'If you take vengeance,' but, 'Unless you forgive from your hearts.'" "Pardon was in his heart," replied the angel; "there he kept it following human custom." The demon said, "As he has received the sin from human custom, so shall he receive chastisement from the supernatural Judge." "Well," replied the angel, "we will judge

him before the Lord." Thrice overcome, the enemy had not exhausted his viperous venom ; he rejoined : " If God is just, this man shall not enter the kingdom of heaven ; for it is written, ' Unless you become like little children you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.' This man has not accomplished this word." " We will judge him before the Lord," repeated the angel ; and he combated, and his adversaries were crushed.

Then the angel who stood at Furse's right said to him, " Behold the world." The man of God looked, and he saw beneath him a darksome valley ; and he saw, too, four fires, separated from each other by regular distances. " What are these fires ? " asked the angel. As he did not know, the angel said, " These four fires gnaw away the world, although all sins have been effaced in baptism, by confessing Christ, and renouncing Satan, his works and pomps. The first is falsehood ; for men fulfil not the promise made in baptism, to renounce Satan and all his works. The second is cupidity ; for they put the goods of this world before the love of heavenly things. The third is dissension ; for they fear not, even without reason, to offend their neighbor's soul. The fourth is impiety ; for they esteem it as nothing to deceive and strip the weak."

And the fires spread ; they formed one conflagration, and it approached. The saint in fear said to the angel, " See ! the fire is coming upon me." The angel replied, " Thou hast not kindled it ; thou shalt not be consumed in it. Great and terrible as it is, it measures its ardor by each one's faults ; for in it all iniquity shall be consumed ; and as the body is consumed by evil desires, so shall the soul be burned by a just expiation." The saint then beheld the angel advance and divide the fire,

which formed two walls, and on each side his two angels protected him.

In the very midst of the flames unclean spirits flew about ; they took arms, and a new battle was joined. One of them said, "The servant that knoweth his master's will and doeth it not, does he not deserve to be beaten ?" "And wherein," replied the angel, "has this man failed to accomplish the orders of his Lord ?" "He has," says Satan, "accepted the gifts of the wicked." "He has thought," observed the angel, "that they had done penance." "He should have tried their perseverance in penance," said the demon, "and then taken their gifts ; for presents blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the just." The angel replied, "We will judge him before God."

The great deceiver, seeing himself baffled, burst forth in blasphemies against his Creator. "Till now," he cried, "we have believed God truthful." "Well ?" asked the angel. "The prophet Isaias," continued the insolent spirit, "has promised that the fault not purged on earth shall be purged in heaven, when he cried to the Jews, 'If you will hearken to me, you shall bear the fruits of the earth ; but if you will not, and provoke my wrath, you shall be devoured by the sword.' Now, this man has not purged his faults on earth, and receives no punishment here ; where then is God's justice ?" But the indignant angel cried out, "BlaspHEME not, for thou knowest nought of God's secret judgments." And Satan said, "What is secret here ?" "As long as penance may be expected," said the angel, "the divine mercy does not forsake the creature." "But," objected Satan, "there is no time here for penance." "Perhaps there is," observed the

angel; "thou knowest not the depth of the divine mysteries." The demon closed, saying, "Let us go; there is no judgment here."

But another continued: "There is still a narrow door which few pass, and there we can wait. It is written, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'" The angel replied, "This man has done good to his neighbor." "It is not enough," rejoined the enemy, "to do good, unless he loves his neighbor as himself." "To do good," retorted the angel, "is the fruit of charity, and God will render to every man according to his works." But the devil persisted: "His charity has not fulfilled the precept; he must be damned." Then the accursed troop combated, but the angels triumphed.

Six times vanquished, the devil, according to his wont, burst forth into blasphemies. "If God is not unjust, if falsehood displeases him, and disregard of his word, this man shall not be exempt from torment; for he promised to renounce the world, yet loved the world, contrary to the order of the apostle, who says, 'Love not the world, nor the things of the world.' Now, this man was withheld neither by his own promise nor by the injunctions of the apostle." To which the holy angel replied, "Not for himself did he love the things of the world, but to distribute them to the needy." "No matter how a man loves them," persisted the frightful spirit, "if he loves them, he violates God's law and his Christian engagement in baptism."

The angels triumphed; their enemies succumbed; but the devil still had recourse to insidious accusations. "'Unless you declare to the perverse their perversity, I will seek in your hands the trace of their blood.' So it is written. This man has not, as in duty bound,

preached penance to sinners." "It is written," replied the angel, "in those times, the wise man shall be silent, for these times are bad. When the hearers despise the word, the tongue of the master is tied." But the old accuser said, "Yet he should speak till he suffered and died; he can neither consent nor be silent."

Thus did the demons fiercely dispute and combat, until by God's judgment the angels gained the victory, and their enemies were overthrown and prostrated.

Then around the saint spread an immense brightness, and the angels and the elect chanted, "Pain and length of time are nought when an eternity of glory is gained." Furseay was inundated with sweetness and joy, and raising his eyes, he saw great radiant multitudes; their dazzling wings flashed in space. They came to him and surrounded him, and the trouble, the terror inspired by the fires and the demons, were banished afar. To his eyes appeared two venerable men whom he had known in the country of his birth, and he thought that they were dead. Approaching, they told their names — Bevan and Meldan; and they conversed familiarly with him.

At that moment, in heaven's calm depths opened an ethereal door; two angels entered; around them gushed with new force the divine light, and the pure spirits were heard chanting in four choirs, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of Sabbaoth." And as his soul was intoxicated with the inexpressible delight, the ravishing canticles of heaven, the angels grouped on his right and his left; and the one on his right asked him whether he knew where these transports of joy took place; and as he knew not, the angel told him, "It is in the assembly on high, to which we belong."

Meanwhile the melody became ever more clear and

more penetrating, and Fursey thought that they were chanting for him. He said to the angel, "It is a great joy to hear such concerts." "It is a joy," replied the heavenly spirit, "of which we are often deprived for the service of men; and even then the devil undoes our work by corrupting man's heart. In this kingdom of peace and purity," he added, "no judgment is pronounced except on human wickedness." But Fursey's soul was absorbed in the joys and delights of heaven.

But lo, from the invisible city came forth, luminous as angels, Meldan and Bevan; and coming to Fursey, they bade him return to his mortal life. In silence and with a troubled heart did he receive this order; and as the angels bore him away, the two saints said, "What fearest thou? Thy toil is but a day's journey. Preach and announce to all that judgment is at hand." Fursey interrogating them as to the end of the world, they replied that it had not come, although it was not far off; that famine and disease would ravage the human race, and that a sign should be seen in the sun.

Bevan spoke long to the holy man, revealing to him that God's wrath was suspended over the nations, but that it menaced especially their princes and doctors. In grave words, worthy of the gospel and heaven, he gave him wholesome advice and priceless instructions, which Fursey was to transmit to Ireland. "Go, then," he said at last, "proclaim to her princes that they must leave iniquity, do penance, and work out their salvation. Declare to the princes of the church that God is jealous when they prefer the world to him, and that it is serving the world to neglect the care of souls."

Then the blessed company that attended him departed, and he remained alone with the three angels. They

were soon near the great fire ; and the angel, as on the first occasion, went before, clearing the way, dividing the flame right and left ; but lo, from the midst of the furnace a human face, a man hurled by the demons, struck the saint's shoulder, and cheek touched cheek. Fursey felt his shoulder and cheek burn, and he saw that it was a man who on his death bed had left him a garment. The angel seized the damned one, and hurled him into the flames. But the spirit of malice cried, " Why repulse him whom thou didst welcome ? Thou didst share his goods : share his torment." " It was not through avarice," replied the angel, " that he accepted his present, but to save his soul." The fire ceased. Yet the angel said to Fursey, " The fire that thou hadst kindled has burned thee ; if thou hadst not received the clothes of this man dying in his sin, thou wouldst not have felt in thy body the fire of his torture." And he too exhorted him to preach penance to men.

Fursey found himself above his dwelling ; but he recognized neither the house nor the crowd of persons lamenting, nor his garments, nor his body ; and when the angel bade him resume his mortal tabernacle, he feared to approach it, not recognizing the corpse. " Away with this fear," said the angel ; " even in it thou canst preserve thee from weakness and evils ; thou hast just now triumphed over the assaults of the evil one ; he shall no more prevail against thee." At the same time, looking at his body, the breast opened as if to receive his soul, and the angel's last words were, " Let pure water be poured over thy limbs, and thou shalt feel no pain but that of the fire that has touched thee. Do good ; till the end we will follow thy steps, and thus we shall receive thee amongst us."

Issuing from the profound repose of death, he sat up, and beheld the multitude of his kindred, neighbors, and ecclesiastics, who surrounded him. Then he groaned over the greatness of human folly ; and thinking how difficult and dangerous a passage death is, how divine the reward of those who reach the blissful abode, he revealed in order all that he had seen. He ordered pure water to be poured over him, and the print that that damned one had left became visible. The body, strange to declare, bore the mark of the pain that the soul alone had undergone.

Then leaving his house, he preached the word of God, announcing to all the people what he had seen and heard. Grace was incomparable in him—disengaged from earth, giving himself to all, to prelates and the faithful, to nobles and kings, amiable to the good, terrible to the wicked ; and the power of miracles was also in him.

One year had thus been spent in teaching throughout all Ireland ; and the anniversary arrived of the day when ecstasy had taken him from his body. That same night, as many wise and religious men were near him, a languor benumbed his limbs ; yet life continued to palpitate feebly in his heart, and he beheld the angel of the Lord, who gave him useful lessons for his preaching, foretelling him that he should pursue this work twelve years.

When that term had expired, escaping from the crowds that overwhelmed him, from the ill will of some whose envy he excited, he left all he had, and with a small number of brethren, went to a little island in the sea. Thence visiting, as he passed, the shores of many islands, he reached the eastern coast of the Angles, where he

was welcomed with honor by King Sigberth ; and by the word of God he softened the hearts of the barbarians.

At the expiration of the twelve years his body had fainted again, and he had received a visit from the angels. They animated his zeal, reminding him of Christ's commandment, " Watch and pray, for ye know not the day nor the hour." Then the man of God hastened to build a monastery in the place which the king had given him. It was an agreeable spot in the midst of the forest, near the sea ; but he left it in the hands of his brother Foillan, and went to join his other brother, Ultan, who had long lived in solitude, in the delight of a contemplative life. But he had not reached the time or place of his repose. Scarcely had a year passed when he left his retreat, troubled, too, by the incursions of the pagans. He wished to visit Rome.

Clodwig, king of the Franks, and the patrician Herchenald, received him, offering him a site to build a monastery. A beautiful river, with its calm and teeming waters, flowed by ; rich meadows developed their verdure ; the vine multiplied its tufted branches laden with clusters ; a vast forest waved around, wooing by the shelter of its hoary trees, silence and recollectedness. There at last reposed this soul, wearied by an ardent apostolate, broken by the superhuman enjoyments of mystic ravishment. There he formed new disciples. Ireland constantly sent him others. Later, however, he again took up his pilgrim's staff ; he wished before he died to see his brothers again. But the angel of his visions stopped him some steps from his abode ; at the moment of leaving earth for the last time, he was again rapt to heaven, and came down again among men, only to strengthen himself with the holy Viaticum which was

to fling open to him the ethereal gates of the invisible city, where light is so radiant, harmony so inebriating.

His body remained at Peronne, on the hospitable lands of Duke Haymon. A church arose, soon illustrious for the relics that hallowed it. The monks of succeeding ages chanted his merits and his miracles. "Fever and paralysis, spasm, gravel, and hernia, also dropsies, all other diseases that man healeth not, are quickly healed by the grace of this saint."* A life so wonderful, a spirit so enthusiastic, a heart so tender, deserved a different eulogy. Had Ireland possessed his remains, she would probably have felt a higher inspiration than did the monks of Gaul.

Fursey died about 650. His life, or at least the account of his visions, such as we have it,† seems to have been written about 665. We have thought it curious enough to give it at length.

Man's life, in the Christian view, is a combat against an invisible enemy. The history of this combat, related by the poets of Christianity, would be, to us at least, a mystic Iliad. Fursey's vision is not the whole poem, but it is, so to say, the last canto; strange poetry doubtless, but deficient neither in sublimity nor in interest, well adapted to move unquiet and believing souls. In this dogmatic, religious and perfectly moral poesy, the drama does not end with what we call life; the last act, the dénouement, remains. Man has struggled against his enemy till death; on leaving this world he meets his enemy again, and there a last struggle takes place, face to face, between heaven and hell; heaven, which he will

* Vita Fursei, (Colgan.) Officium S. Fursei Hymn.

† Mabillon, Obs. præv. Colgan, Adnot.

soar triumphantly to a victor; or hell, into which he will be hurled if vanquished, to be eternally the prey of the monster who would devour him. To consider this merely as the matter of an epic, surely for believers the subject is not inferior to the victory of Æneas, the vengeance of Achilles, the fall of Hector, or the destruction of Turnus.

Poetry is a variable and relative thing. If every man imagines and thinks in his own way, still more is this the case with ages and races. Notwithstanding what there is eternal and immutable in truth and beauty, in spite of the power of Homer's genius, we do not enter into the battles of the Trojan war with the instinct, spirit, manners of Greece in the heroic age. We appreciate better certain literary merits; but the dramatic effects are lessened. Imagination never entirely replaces nature. One must be a Hellene of the days of old to feel, on reading the ancient poet, the patriotic emotions, the warlike impulse, the impetuous passions, evoked by the voice of the minstrel. One must needs, too, be a Scot of the seventh century, to find in the conceptions and accounts of faith all their absorbing beauties. We must at least figure to ourselves these souls wrested from the materialism and ignorance of barbarous religions, and placed for the first time in the presence of heaven, hell, and the Infinite. What trouble! what aspirations! what terrors! And when these dramas of the unseen were related, whose dénouement is an immortal triumph, or an eternal agony, who could tell the heart-rending anguish, the ardent hopes, the agitation, tumult, the outbursts of agonizing consciences, and exalted imaginations?

This is not a literary history, and it is not for us to seek how the poet — whether that poet be Fursey or his historian — was able to treat such a subject. His work sprang, at least, from a soul deeply moved, violently agitated by the terrors of hell, ardently enamoured, above all, of the bliss of heaven ; the imagination which produced it possessed, at least in some degree, the poesy of mysticism, the poesy of fear and desire, of horror and admiration, of the undefined, the ideal, superhuman aspiration and longings unappeased. It possessed, too, in some degree, that dramatic art or instinct which gives life to the scenes and personages ; for the characters are all true and living here. Are not the demons harsh, envenomed, subtle, and malign ? Has not the angel the serenity, the calm, of good and powerful beings ? Do we not feel that mute soul shudder and shrink, or expand with new life, at all the changes in that struggle and voyage ? The very theological combat, that shock of arguments so singularly mingled and confounded with the assault of arrow and sword, and which seems strangely borrowed from the practices of the schools, is, in its way, touching and true, far more touching and true than the Homeric battles of *Paradise Lost*. Is it not a war of souls ? And what are, in this ideal arena, the legions that meet, number, and cope with each other ? Are they not the good and evil thoughts, good and evil opinions, good actions and bad ? And is not the issue of the battle a judgment ? But when believing minds saw Fursey, a saint, engaged in so arduous a contest, when they saw his adversary so pressing, so subtle, so obstinate, so ingenious, they might well, reflecting on their own case, dread the issue of a similar struggle.

For the poetic emotion was at the same time a moral and salutary emotion ; the reader who had painfully followed the progress of the drama in which Furseys figured, felt happy at the close, to see him secure the victory ; but he thought also of preparing his own.

Amid these relations come episodes — exhortations, instructions, which borrow from the dramatic circumstances of the narrative a peculiar eloquence. Furseys vision contains one long and powerful, curious, too, as bearing on the moral history of the Irish church. We have only indicated it, for it is not our purpose here to study the sermons of Ireland. But had the visions only presented under a striking form the scenes of the invisible world, the interlude of the two lives, the enjoyments or sufferings which may befall a soul after terrestrial death, they would still be eminently moral. Poesy is indissolubly connected with faith, and the emotions of the imagination become a direct and powerful means of conversion and sanctification.

Read and meditated in cloisters, they possessed the timid conscience and the dreamy soul ; they taught and facilitated contemplation, opening to them the fantastic space where they might soar. Sometimes, perhaps, when they had long floated in the shadows and terrors of the evil regions, they returned trembling and fear-smitten ; when they had sailed over the splendid ocean, and plunged into the torrential light of the happy spheres, they returned penetrated and dazzled. Sometimes, perhaps, our day had become to them but as night, and the eyes which had caught a glimpse of the eternal sun no longer distinguished the pale sun of earth ; the intelligence initiated in absolute realities and true

truths became insensible to our relative truths and our fleeting realities. Then the world would tax with imbecility or folly this blindness and this trouble ; but the church had the secret. She honored with fear, she envied with respect, she loved with pride, those privileged souls who had fathomed the mysteries of the future life, and who returned marked with a divine sign and wearied with their voyage.

CHAPTER XIX.

LABORS OF THE CHURCH.—STUDIES IN IRELAND.

ECSTASY did not fill up Fursey's whole life ; between these rare instants of rapture where his soul was refreshed and reposed, his whole life was preaching, founding, toil. So it is with the Irish church. Prayer, pious adventures, mystic elevations, are in her life the contemplative and poetic part ; not her whole life. Visions are a privilege, toil a duty ; the privilege is granted to a few, the duty imposed on all. The Irish church labored.

"The monk is clothed and fed by his labor,"* said Paul the hermit. "Let monks labor, and eat their own bread," said Fursey.† It was the rule of Patrick, the rule of Columbkil, the rule of Columban. The monks earned their livelihood by the sweat of their brow ; they were cultivators. Where a monastery arose, the marsh was dried up, the forest felled, the earth cleared, the river forced to drive the mill. The church accepted the soil given her, took sometimes what was not given ; in the five realms, the monasteries are counted by hundreds, the monks by thousands ; and we still regret, when we read both history and legend, that the monks were not more numerous, and did not take or accept more. In Ireland, little land was cultivated ; men lived

* Egness. Brendan.

† Vita Fursei.

by war and plunder ; the monks did not plunder, did not fight ; they cultivated. Why cite for example one fact, or three, or four ? They swarm in the Acts. Whenever we take the saints, they are at prayer or at labor.

As we have seen, they were, from the days of St. Patrick, founders, goldsmiths, weavers ; they built their houses and their churches ; they exercised all arts and trades. In the monastic system of association, the first law of each community is to be self-sufficient, and the peculiar condition of Ireland rendered this condition more urgent and more necessary. The monks of later times gathered then, and perpetuated on this point, the traditions of Patrick's first disciples.

But one of the works preferred, recommended, was the copying of books. In this, as in many other things, they anticipated St. Benedict. Nor are we to suppose that it was left to the disciples and less learned ; the greatest masters zealously exercised it. Neassan, Columbkil, Adamnan, and many others,* bequeathed after them some of these venerable monuments of their toil ; for they were precious preserved. Many churches had among their treasures Bibles or Gospels, where the hand which had traced them seemed to have left something of its sanctity and power. On these venerated pages princes took solemn oaths, and no one dared violate such an oath.

These copies were sometimes works of art, and the manuscripts of the first centuries might figure without disadvantage, according to the descriptions which have come down, besides the curious *chefs-d'œuvre* of succeeding ages. In all the wonders of the county Kildare,†

* Usher, Brit. Ant. Adamnan, Vita Colum.

† Topog. Hiber.

says Gerald, I have seen nothing more wonderful than the book which an angel, they say, had made for St. Bridget. It contains the four Gospels according to the Concordance of St. Jerome. On almost every page are different figures, painted in various colors; here a countenance bearing the impress of divine majesty; there the four evangelists, with their mystic attributes. They have two, four, or six wings. Elsewhere, it is the lion, ox, eagle, the human head; then a crowd of other figures, in almost infinite number. If you regard lightly, and in a superficial manner, the beauty of the work escapes you; but examining better, the eye, penetrating all its merit, discovers such fine and delicate, such clear and multiplied lines, mingled and interwoven with so much art, and, in fine, such fresh and lively colors, that you would style it rather the work of an angel than of a man. An angel had at least designed it, and guided the hand. Bridget had desired a copy of the Gospels made by an able copyist, and the next morning the monk was to begin the work. During the night, an angel appeared to him, exhibiting to him a tablet covered with figures. "Canst thou reproduce these figures on the page thou wilt write to-morrow?" The monk replied that he could not hope to do it; such art and such perfection were far above his ignorance. "Well," replied the angel, "let thy mistress pray for thee to our Lord, that she may open thy understanding and thy eyes, and give skill to thy hand." The next night, he returned with new designs, and continued this as long as the work lasted. The monk regarded the heavenly model, engraved it in his eyes and his memory, and on the following day reproduced it faithfully in his pages. The angel inspired, Bridget prayed, the monk

executed; and thus was the wonderful work accomplished.

If we believe tradition, repeated by Hector Boetius in his history, Fergus, at the sack of Rome, bore off books as his share of the booty. Returning home, he sent some to the Irish of Iona; for as early as 379, the Romans and Picts, having momentarily driven the Scots from Albania, some priests and monks had retired to that island, where they laid the first foundations of the monastery which became so celebrated in the time of Columbkille. Twenty years later, Palladius, coming from Rome, brought more books to Ireland, which St. Fintan's church possessed down to the close of the eighth century.* Not an Irishman, doubtless, even before St. Patrick, visited the schools of Gaul, Italy, or Brittany, without loading himself with these treasures, less rare, moreover, in that day than they became subsequently. It would, however, be equally difficult and unprofitable to give here a history of books in Ireland. To cut the matter short, let us say that the books brought from Cambria, France, and Rome were rapidly multiplied. Many were needed for so many schools and so many scholars; and besides, the Irish masters were afterwards liberal in lending books to the pupils who came from Great Britain.† What were these books? another question, more useful perhaps, and more easily answered, as it can be resolved by the study of Irish writers. Let us only add that among the books handled by the doctors of Bangor, Armagh, and Iona, some became precious. They were enriched with notes, various readings, collations, and commentaries. Such was the Psalter of St. Cammyn of

* Eleran, Vita S. Patricii.

† St. Bede, Eccles. History.

Inis Cealltra; Usher saw fragments of it. "At the top of each page," says he, "was collated the original Hebrew; the right margin was filled with little scholia; but only four leaves remained."* At Kells he found still a copy of the Gospels in the handwriting of Columbkille; and from this precious antiquity he drew many readings to compare with the Vulgate.

Long before the rule and the monks of St. Benedict were planted in Ireland; long before the eighth century, and from the first, the Irish monasteries were laborious and learned schools, where men sanctified themselves by prayer, manual labor, and mental application. All that was then known was taught there; it was the programme of Cassiodorus and Alcuin; and by the renown of the Irish schools, by the intercourse which they kept up with Gaul, by the very works which they produced, some of them still extant, it is easy to see that they were in no respect inferior to the most renowned.

In those days the roots of science were bitter indeed. "How many blows, and what pain," cries St. Columban, "does it not cost to acquire a knowledge of music!† What fatigue, what affliction, does not the study of medicine require! The lovers of wisdom, the disciples of philosophy, to what extremities of distress are they not condemned!" Men had to go into exile, wander, beg, suffer hardship, cold, hunger, nakedness, and with that, too, the rigors of a strict and severe discipline. He loves his son who chastises him with the scourge;‡ a wholesome principle apparently, as it produced in so many disciples fruits of science and sanctity, but terrible nevertheless, where practised by irascible or over-severe

* Usher, *Eccles. Antiq.* 972. † Columban, *Op.* iv. ‡ *Id.*, *Poem.* vi.

masters. It was the spirit of Irish discipline, and Columban himself has inscribed it in his sentences,* commented and applied it without restriction in his rules.

Nothing discouraged. The love of learning, the ardor of living a pious life, the venerable authority of the masters, the unction of their teaching, and the vivacity of their charity, made all else borne and forgotten. When they left these austere schools, it was to enshrine them in their memory in sweet and pious remembrance. It is a characteristic and touching thing, this unshaken homage vowed to the master by the respect and affection of the pupil. Adelman, become a bishop and bending with years, recalled with emotion to his old fellow-pupils the lessons which they had received together. Eugenius, seated on the chair of Peter, listened, with a deference known to all, to the advice which a Bernard gave with an authority equally known; for the same sentiments honored all the middle ages. Columban, too, gave lessons to popes; and in what terms did he speak of Comgall, his former master! "We do not speak from presumption, but for the edification of souls. Instead of relying on our baseness, we shall rest on the authority of a greater master. Now, this is the doctrine which St. Comgall gave us in his eloquent lessons, for he is before me in merit and science, as in time. I was his unworthy disciple, and to attack cowardice and ignorance, I will cover myself with his word."† Nearly three thousand monks pressed around Comgall, and wherever the chair of one of these revered doctors arose, thousands flocked to read, by the light of science,

* Columban, Reg. Monast., Reg. Cœnob.

† St. Columban, Serm. II.

the most difficult books of philosophy and the Holy Scriptures.

Every monastery, every cell, was a school. When a child had been divinely marked for sanctity and the church, he was sometimes sent to imbibe the rudiments of doctrine from the nearest source. The neighboring priest or hermit formed his youth. Sometimes even the retreat of a recluse, the convent of an abbess, was the spiritual cradle of the future bishop; and when that mistress was Mida* or Rathna, many years elapsed before the disciple had to seek doctrine more profound, or instructors of greater ability. Mochoedoc and Colman remained to the age of twenty under female guidance. And why could not women transmit science, when they had received it from the greatest masters, and sought it in the greatest schools? We have seen Kynrecha knock in vain at St. Senan's door; but all were not so inflexible. Lassara's parents wished to settle her in the world;† an angel bore her off to the cell of Rignata, sister of Finnian; then Finnian became her master, taught her the Psalms and other books of Scripture. When she vowed her virginity to Christ, Finnian confided her to Kieran, his disciple, and subsequently made her an abbess. When Kieran was questioned as to her, he replied, "In sooth, I know not what I should say. God is my witness, that I have never seen her face, nor aught of her, except the hem of her robe, and I have never spoken a word to her not in the lesson."‡ With such masters the lessons might be profitable, and the teaching did not wander from the subject matter.

* Vita Midae, (Colgan.)

† Vita Finnian, (Colgan.)

‡ Vita Lassar., (Colgan.)

This was, for those who were to proceed farther, the first degree of study ; from the secondary school, they passed to the great school, where the science then possessed in the church was taught in all its purity and all its pomp. That was the second degree.

These great schools multiplied ; and disciples multiplied in the schools. Not to mention Lismore, Beg-
Erin, Armagh, Sabhall, and others founded by St. Patrick or before him, we soon behold rising Clanderkan, Lughmad, Cluainard, Ross, Iona, Rathene, Banchor, of which Olcan, Mochteus, Finnean, Comgall, Comman, Columbkil, Carthag, Brendan were the creators and first masters. With them we must also count Jarlath at Cluain-Foss, Fachnan at Ross-Ailithry, and many others. Such were the *universities* of Ireland. Those of Armagh, Cluain-Aird, Iona, and Banchor were the most numerous and the most famous, whose renown and prosperity were maintained longest and most brilliantly ; for many rose with a man, and might sink with him. More than one perhaps had a splendor no longer than the transitory establishments in France of Berenger, Abelard, or certain schools momentarily famous for the presence of a prince of science. But others, Armagh, Banchor, Iona, especially, maintained for centuries the glory of their traditions. Iona among its abbots counted a series of distinguished names and learned writers — Cumean, Adamnan, Segen and Suibneus.

Without leaving their island, the Irish might then, with learned masters and in different schools, initiate themselves in every branch of knowledge, in every mooted question, exercise themselves in the diversity of doctrines and methods ; yet many were not satisfied with this : when they thought that they had exhausted the

treasures of Irish wisdom, they went to listen to Gaul and Rome. This was the third degree of studies. Olcan, Mochteus, Finnian, Kieran, in the fifth century, were formed in the Gallic or Roman schools, which had sent forth already St. Patrick's co-laborers, the first masters of Ireland. When the Irish schools were organized, it was not altogether so. In foreign countries, they found ever, doubtless, new opinions and traditions, and there was always something to learn ; but the pupils had become masters, and France had more than once to take lessons from Ireland.

All this study was not sterile. The literary history of Ireland, and the succession of her schools, do not fall in the domain of the legend ; but we must say at least that these monastic studies, and the struggles of the church, gave birth to many writings. Some still remain, most frequently mutilated, indeed—a treatise of St. Patrick, some works of St. Columban, the books of Adamnan, a treatise attributed to Fursey, a letter of Cummean, a commentary of Aileran, some fragments of St. Gall, some verses of St. Livinus ; then the works of the two Sedulius, the labors of Scotus Erigena ; finally, the commentary of Claudius on St. Matthew, the only one of his many lucubrations that has come down to us. This short catalogue is perhaps incomplete ; but it cannot be made much longer. The destroyed monuments, on the other hand, if we credit Dempster, or even Bale, were innumerable ; more trustworthy authors, Usher, Hare, and Cave,* still allow us to believe that Ireland

* Usher, Britan. Antiq. De Scriptoribus Hiberniæ. Biblioth. Liter. Acta S. Ord. S. Bened. Obs. prv.

was fruitful enough, and that her masters took in writing, as well as in lectures, an active and important part in the researches and discussions which in those days absorbed the doctors and writers—the councils of the church. To these we must add homilies, penitential books, collections of canons, rules, and monastic institutes, all these secondary branches of religious science and literature; then certain historical compositions, such as the chronicle of St. Cuanach, the two books, which Hanmer attributes to St. Keiwin, on the Origin of the Irish, the annals which preceded the excellent works of Marianus, and labors that relate to geography, such as the work of Dicuil, and St. Virgil's book on the Antipodes, mentioned by Usher. Albinus is probably the author of the rhetoric that bears the name of Alcuin; and his companion, Clement, besides his *Life of Charlemagne*, had written, like Dicuil, Observations on Grammar, and his two works remain. We may also count certain other works on the wonders and natural curiosities of Ireland; and if we add to all this the Hymns and Lives of the Saints in Latin and Irish, we shall perhaps find that Ireland furnished an interesting and considerable part in the libraries of the middle ages.

Now, all these names, all these labors, are prior to the second half of the ninth century. Erigena alone belongs to the last epoch. Irish science, before waning and expiring, concentrated in him all its splendor, to radiate it on Gaul and the whole church.

In the ninth century, in fact, Ireland was given up to the pirates of the north. It is a bloody and lamentable history. For nearly a century, the barbarians coming

directly from their country, or from the Orcades, England, Gaul, or Armorica, traversed Ireland in every direction, plundering, slaying, burning; and there, as elsewhere, attacking monasteries and churches. One would deem them armed and let loose by the spirit of paganism and darkness. The Isle of Saints disappeared in the smoke of conflagrations; it was covered with the ashes of its schools and books, irrigated with the blood of its readers and scribes.

"It was," says Jocelyn,* "the time of the darkness already predicted by St. Patrick. In those days the saints lay hid in grottos and caverns, like coals hid under the ashes, flying the face of the wicked, who daily sought to slay them as lambs doomed to the slaughter." The ancient monarchy of the Heberians all but became a Scandinavian kingdom, and Turgesius was, for many years, really the prince of Ireland.† But God, who had not abandoned it forever, made his passions the instrument of his destruction. Turgesius loved Melcha, the daughter of O'Maclachlin; and the Irish prince promised to send her to him with fifteen of her noblest and fairest companions. The king of the north awaited them in his mansion on an island of Loch-Erin, with fifteen of his noblest and manliest companions. But when they raised the veils of their betrothed, instead of timid girls, they found hardy youths, whose daggers were soon sheathed in the hearts of the pirates. And Ireland was delivered. But it had long remained in the night and silence of death; and when the barbarians had departed, when light dawned again, when life returned, all had to

* Jocelyn, *Vita Patricii*.

† Giraldus Cambr., *Topog. Hiberniæ*.

CHAPTER XX.

EXTERIOR MOVEMENT. — TRAVELLERS.

WHILE in the very interior of its church Irish Christianity was thus expanding, flourishing, and fructifying, like the mystic vine of which the Scriptures so often portray the fruitful stock, the perfumed clusters, it extended without, and spread beyond, its shores. Ireland, scarcely converted, already yielded to that secret power of expansion, which made it for four or five centuries flow over all Europe.

The Irish race was adventurous in travel, like all those that peopled the great Irish archipelago. In the fourth century, Avienus, speaking of these islands, which, withal, he scarcely knew, already witnesses it. He speaks of the *Æstryrnides*, but his verses apply equally to Ireland. "Their inhabitants," he says, "plough in well-known barks their wide-tossed seas, and the monster-peopled chasms of their ocean. They know not how, with pine and maple, to adjust the framework of their ships; it is not the spruce which bends on their sides; but strange to say, they employ in their construction well-knit hides, and in these leathern boats oft traverse the vast sea."* All the fleets that in these days ploughed the waters of Gothland, Scandinavia, Saxony, and Britain, were of the same easy and unsubstantial

* Rufus Avienus, *Ora Marit.*, v. 94.

fabric. With these vessels the children of Ireland made war on Britain, and landed on Armorica or the Orcades.

Here long stopped the voyages of the Irish. Rome had not conquered them, and her power held them in the narrow limits where their own barbarism retained them. But for Christianity there were no frontiers, and barriers fell. Christianized Rome attracted the islanders as they became Christians ; and we have seen the origin of the movement, which, in the first centuries, bore to Italy the precursors and immediate successors of St. Patrick, or those who on his arrival became his fellow-laborers. This movement, ever on the increase, assumed, under the impulse of St. Patrick, a new extension and activity.

If we consider it together, that is to say, if we consider at once all the travellers, who, for various motives, then set out, leaving Ireland to spread over all countries, the movement was prodigious. The whole Irish people seem travelling ; one would call it a migration. The first who ventured to go brought back pious and dazzling accounts ; they had seen Gaul, Italy, above all, Rome. The basilicas, the monasteries ; the pomp that religion displayed with the resources of an advanced civilization ; the schools where illustrious doctors taught ; the places consecrated by the examples of the saints, or the miraculous bodies of the martyrs ; the spectacle, in fine, of all the greatness, all the wealth of a now ancient church, the universal legatee of the remains of Greek and Roman civilization, — had seized the amazed soul of the untutored neophytes, and their accounts inflamed the imagination of their countrymen. They stifled in their island ; they launched their barks

and hastened to breathe the air of the great Catholic countries. Vessels, doubtless, failed them ; then all was good in their hands to pass the strait, so large was it ; unshapen trunks, rocks, floated and sailed for them ; an act of faith, a sign of the cross, made them light and faithful vessels.

They were soon known ; they were every where, or rather they passed every where. For if they often settled permanently on a foreign shore, they wandered long before stopping ; and often, too, it was in Ireland that they returned to close the long and irregular line of their capricious itinerancy. " With the Scots," says Walafrid Strabo in the ninth century,* " the habit of travelling has become, as it were, a second nature."

" What shall I say of Ireland," cries Heiric,† " which, despising the dangers of the ocean, emigrates entirely with her troops of philosophers, and descends on our shores ? Her most learned masters become exiles, to place themselves under the obedience of our wise Solomon." Charles the Bald, this Solomon, this Charlemagne, — for contemporaries give him, too, that glorious name, — had at least the merit of protecting letters, and the Irish especially. They were welcomed at their arrival, and when they could not be detained, their departure was witnessed with regret. " This did Chromnal charge me to tell when he left, for you Irishmen are always leaving," says Walafrid to Probus, addressing him a graceful reproach, expressing a kindly regret.

But these inconstant voyagers were not curious or useless travellers. If they went for edification and instruction, where the ablest masters and most authorized

* Vita S. Galli.

† Pref. Vitæ S. Germani.

churches were to be found, they went also especially where there were neither masters nor churches. Study then was only a preparation for the apostolate. When they were as sure of their doctrine as of their zeal, they became masters in their turn, and went forth to create new churches, found Christian colonies among the savage nations of central and northern Europe; they labored to enlarge the bounds of the gospel, and the apostolate was often but the road to martyrdom; the foundations of the cathedral and monastery oft cemented with the blood of the founder.

Others, following a vocation less heroic, perhaps, and hazardous, remained in Christian countries, but there, too, were often trials to undergo, and always good to do. Amid tribes but yesterday barbarous pagans scarce wrested from the depth-stirring agitations of invasion, the gospel had not always succeeded in penetrating profoundly into men's manners; the faith remained or became gross; and if the general discipline of the church was admirable, if in many parts it was faithfully practised, the particular discipline of certain countries, and of most monasteries, was weakened, obliterated, or corrupted. In the impulse of their primitive fervor, the saints of Ireland found that they had outstripped most of those who, having preceded them in the way, had had time to be weary and fall asleep. They awoke them, they raised them up. New or renewed houses resumed the forgotten traditions of spiritual life, and the ancient Lauras of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt seemed to rise again in the west, while here and there, amid the astonished population, isolated saints, by the rigors of their ascetic life, recalled at once the memory and the virtues of the most wonderful anchorets.

Others, in fine, — nor were these, probably, the least numerous, — went their way, pilgrims indeed, following all over Europe the pious curiosity that led them from station to station, from shrine to shrine, from tomb to tomb, up to seven-hilled Rome, her catacombs, her tomb of St. Peter and St. Paul, and sometimes beyond the sea to Constantinople, to the Holy Land. Thence they returned with hearts more deeply touched, imagination more vividly struck, a will more strongly devoted, and they communicated to their brethren of all countries, to their brethren of Ireland especially, their emotion and their enthusiasm.

Thus did Ireland for five centuries expand, circulating like a current of new life and blood in the veins of the church, and doubtless contributing notably to give it that renewed youth and vigor which it needed to maintain and complete her toil in the great dilapidation of the fifth century, in the great tottering that lasted long after the ruin.

After the ninth century the expansion stops. The Irish return to their island; at least they are found more rarely abroad, and do not hold the same rank. Their part declined, their action diminished, for their mission was accomplished. All Europe was becoming Christian. The papacy advanced the work of its preponderancy. These two works accomplished, all would be ready for Christianity, gathering its force in the hands of the popes, to expand without, and undertake its war of reaction and conquest against Islamism. A new era begins, and Ireland is no longer needed.

In this expansion of the Irish church of which we have sketched the course, we distinguish, so to say, three currents. Among these travellers or these emi-

grants we distinguish three principal categories : the pilgrims, the missionaries, and those who sought to study or teach abroad. We shall follow them successively, and speak first of the pilgrims.

Once more we remind the reader not to expect here a complete history of Irish travels, missions, and studies, but only the indications or accounts which belong to the legend.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PILGRIMS.—THE STORY OF ARCULPHUS.

A HOLY man, named Molva, said to Mædoc that he wished to go on a pilgrimage to Rome.* "I will not permit thee," said the bishop. "If I cannot see Rome, I shall surely die," replied Molva. Then Mædoc took him in his chariot, and both disappeared till next morning. Meanwhile, it seemed to Molva that he was at Rome, fulfilling his vow in the church of the holy apostles. The next day they reappeared in Fearna, and Mædoc asked his companion if he still wished to go to Rome. "How could I think of such a thing?" replied the holy man. "Did I not fulfil my vow and offer my prayers there yesterday and last night? I am only ashamed to go back to my monastery so soon." Mædoc sent him off, attesting that he had been in Rome. "I do not understand the mystery," adds the narrator, "but what I know is, that St. Molva knew Rome like one who had long tarried there."

Pilgrimages were not usually made so easily or so quick. We have some difficulty even in realizing how they travelled in those days, when men's feet had to bear them, unaided except by the staff on which they leaned, to the distant bourns, which they sometimes wished to reach, across savage or desert countries, among violent or

* Evin, Vita Mædoc, (Colgan.)

† Jocelyn, Vita S. Patricii.

barbarous tribes. They did not find a monastery each nightfall. In the abodes where they might knock had Christian hospitality replaced that of old? Six Irish clerics, animated with the desire of studying the Scriptures and visiting the holy places, had journeyed beyond the sea. They met St. Patrick, and kneeling down, asked his benediction. The apostle blessed them, and foretold that they should all be bishops. The oldest and most vigorous of the party had taken the books and carried them in a fold of his garment, having no other place to carry them. Patrick gave him a seal skin, which they were wont to spread under his feet when he said mass, to make them a sack. The present was received with a thousand thanks, and the six pilgrims went on their way. They crossed the sea happily, and never, during all their way, whether travelling or in the schools, did subsistence fail them; on the contrary, a decent plenty smiled upon them.

Thus, doubtless, went most with a staff and a book; all did not meet St. Patrick, or a saint who like him had experienced the hardships of travel, or who could lend them miraculous assistance. Then they ate the bread of charity or the fruit of the wayside tree, drank the water of the rivulet, slept on the grass or the rock. When food failed, they lived on faith and courage. Did all arrive? Did all return who set out? How many fell on the road, martyrs of the pilgrimage?

“At that time,” says Aethelwerd, in the year 892,* “three excellent men from Ireland, all of fervent faith, were seized with a pious desire; they sewed in haste some skins, made a currach, and taking a week’s pro-

* Aethelwerd, Chron. Lib. iv.

visions, hoisted their sail, proceeding seven days and seven nights, and God's will bearing them on more than their arms or oars, they landed in Cornwall. King Alfred received them with joy; but they soon set out for Rome; thence seeking the footprints of Our Lord, they journeyed towards Jerusalem. Then one of them died." And other two seem to have sunk; but we can scarcely guess the author's text and meaning, so depraved are they. Moreover, he does not follow them in all the incidents or marvels of their voyage. "How," he observes, "can we in so few pages relate these great miracles?"

Did any commit to writing their curious adventures, the description of the nations and places that they visited? No monument remains of these far and painful peregrinations, so frequent and doubtless so interesting. The oldest description of the Holy Land is from an Irish pen; but St. Adamnan's book is not an Irish account, or rather, though the narrative is Irish, the traveller was of Gaul. Arculphus, a Frank bishop, whose see is now unknown, went to Jerusalem with Peter, a hermit of Burgundy; he visited all the promised land, beheld Alexandria, Damascus, Constantinople, and visited a great many islands in the sea. On his homeward voyage he was overtaken by a storm, and wrecked, on the west coast of Britain. Taking this delay patiently, he continued his course in the country where Providence had thrown him, and thus reached the Island of Iona, or Hy, over whose monasteries St. Adamnan then presided. The abbot welcomed the traveller, listened to his accounts, wrote them at his dictation, and made a book useful to all, says Bede,* and especially to those

* Ven. Bede, Hist. Eccl.

who know only by hearsay the land of the patriarchs and prophets. Adamnan presented it to King Alfred, who rewarded the author, and had copies made, to enable it to be in the humblest hands. At a later date Bede abridged it, introducing details drawn from other accounts.

The voyage of Arculphus, thus diffused, might, then, exercise a certain influence, and we may believe that it contributed to popularize the taste for pilgrimages and a love of foreign accounts. It was not, however, made to satisfy the Irish imagination. The picture of the Oriental countries, with their brilliant sun, their mystic deserts, whose torrents, mount, and vale had a sacred and poetic charm for the Occidentals, and which in Ireland men viewed through the Bible illumined by a divine light, paled and seemed unfaithful when received through the medium of a Frank or Burgundian. Nothing can be simpler than Arculphus's narrative; it has neither the charm of a poem, nor the emotion of a romance, nor even the interest of a journal, where the traveller brings himself on the stage and relates all his opinions, joys, and trials. It is not even a narrative; it is notes. They are detailed, and their exact simplicity makes them a precious document in the history of the holy places; but what science has gained poesy has lost. A tradition on the origin of Constantinople; a picturesque and popular story, of which the hero is the St. George in stone, who towered above his charger in one of the squares of Grecian Rome; finally, the history of Our Lord's winding sheet,—these are all the wonders that the two French pilgrims gathered by sea and land.

We know the history of the founders of Constantinople. Like the founders of Chalcedony of old, they,

too, were mistaken. God, who had his views as to the future city, wrapped the laborers in sleep; and while they slept, their instruments disappeared. They found them only on the spot where nature, laboring at works of futurity, had prepared the site of a great empire, the capital of two worlds.

The other two legends are not properly legends, but stories. A man, leading a horse, comes to the statue of St. George; he had promised the saint, if he protected him in battle, to offer him his war horse. Instead of fulfilling his vow, he wished to ransom him, and he soon began to bargain. "Twenty pieces of gold," said the soldier; "thirty, forty!" St. George said nothing, remaining motionless; but the soldier's horse also became motionless, as though of stone.* Thrice did his master, believing himself free, seek to lead him away; the animal remained fixed to the earth. "Holy confessor," at last cries the huckster, "thou wast generous as to protection in battle; but methinks thee not generous in a matter of business." The saint kept the horse and the money. Such stories might suit the familiar, and at times irreverential, devotion of Greece or Italy, or the doubtful simplicity, the captious mind of Gaul, better than the poetic but sincere and serious faith of Ireland.

The other bears a far different character, but equally indicative of the authenticity of its origin. A Christian Jew stole away the holy winding sheet, and till his death, thanks to this precious talisman, wealth abounded in his dwelling. When he was about to die, he called his two sons, and divided his property; the eldest took the bulk

* *Delocis sanctis, Lib. iii.*

of his property, the youngest only the divine relic. After some time the opulence of the one was changed to misery, the misery of the other to opulence. They went on for five generations. At the end of that time the relic fell into unbelieving hands, without its beneficent virtue losing its efficacy, and this lasted a long while. Discussions and rival pretensions at last arose between the pagans and the faithful, and it was thus decided: Mainnias, a Saracen prince, chosen arbitrator, kindled a large fire, and leaving the decision to Christ himself, threw the relic on the pile. The marvellous veil escaped the flames, floated for a time as though undecided, then went to the hands of a poor and humble Christian who stood there in the crowd. Who can fail to see here, for all its Christian subject, the turn of Oriental anecdote, the ever-recurring type in the thousand, thousand narratives of their ingenious story tellers?

These foreign elements seldom appear in the Irish legend; it has remained pure and national. It is its singular privilege, among all the legends; at least, no other seems to possess in the same degree this inappreciable privilege. It had no need of borrowing from its neighbors either saints or vestures, and they could scarcely have lent it poesy.

Beneath Bede's pen, the story of Arculphus, abridged and augmented, modifies somewhat; but too little time had elapsed to make the modification notable. Some details are added, some descriptions; some expressions seem to take a vaguer air of wonder and mystery; but the cloud is so light that it escapes you, and may be denied. Surely neither Bede nor Adamnan could cry out on writing their book, as Aethelwerd on thinking of the stories of the three Irish pilgrims, "How chronicle such

great miracles in so few pages?" The Frankish relation did not therefore suit Ireland, and the stories which she took down from the lips of her own pilgrims bear little resemblance to the topographical information, cold description, sterile notes of the two reasonable travellers, and speak to the imagination better than the figures speak to the eyes, with which Venerable Bede illustrates his text.

Poetry seized the accounts of travels. We know now the Irish mind enough to presume that it seized the travellers too. It is a matter of regret, doubtless, that in this great number of monks and bishops, who, at that distant and curious day, visited all the provinces of the east and west, some grave and learned men did not retrace, in simple, faithful books, the picture of the nations, cities, monuments, human personages, and natural events that they met. History would have had its travels, as the legend has its own, and we should be at once instructed and edified. But during all these early ages, Ireland had its legendary writers and poets, but no historian. When she could poetize so quickly or so easily what it had seen or saw with its own eyes, how could it but transform what was afar?

CHAPTER XXII.

THE PILGRIMS: AN IRISH ACCOUNT.

THE eyes of man embrace but a narrow space, and beyond his horizon the unknown begins; the rest of the world is the domain of the imagination, which can open or close it, give it emptiness and nothing, or people it with its works and dreams. Hence that lively curiosity, that instinctive credulity, that welcome the wanderer's tale, that creative fancy which anticipates, develops, transforms, nay, at times replaces them. But if all travels awaken the human imagination, travels beyond the sea solicit and move it perhaps more. If all horizons seem to question our mind, the horizon of the sea troubles and agitates it. A moving surface; the advancing and successively surmounting furrows; plains that rock the traveller, seem to journey with him, and devour him; the agitated and transparent depths, so seemingly endowed with life, and in turn caressing and furious; lines that disappear, and colors that fade; vague distance, where heaven sinks to the sea, or the sea lifts up to heaven; and in the waving abyss beings of strange form, colossal giants, whose form can be but half seen; terrible phenomena, where heaven and ocean seem laboring to blend, and where irresistible and destructive forces explode,—these are spectacles which enchain naturally poetic races. When they picture space beyond space, isles or continents to be

reached only after passing these barriers or abysses, they easily dream of fantastic lands, a different nature, new orders of creatures, a whole world of prodigy and strangeness. When popular faith assigns to the dead a new life of compensation or expiation, it does not traverse the clouds, it does not seek it in the stars; it passes the sea, and ocean's deserts seem large and impenetrable enough to envelop and conceal the abodes which it assigns to future bliss or woe.

The sea is, then, a marvellous stage for the scenes and creations produced by popular imagination. For the travellers of popular tradition, its space will be ever infinite and full of the unknown; its archipelagoes ever inexhaustible, and Odysseys will ever be the tales of mariners. "The Lord," says the Cambrian Gerald, speaking of Irish accounts, "has done whatever he willed in heaven, on earth, in the sea, and in every abyss. He is admirable in his saints, and great in all his works; but it is in the remote extremities of the earth that unfettered nature delights in the most astonishing prodigies." *

The two personages, who, in the Irish legends, open the cycle of maritime poems and marvellous adventures, are St. Abban and St. Patrick.

One day St. Ybar,† St. Patrick, and St. Abban were in the same vessel on Lough Carman, when an unknown monster rose from the waters; it had a hundred heads, all of different forms; it saw by two hundred eyes, heard by as many ears. Its highest head rose towards heaven, and its throat vomited forth water in torrents, amid the clouds of heaven; the rising

* Topog. Hib.

† Vita Abban, (Colgan.)

waves were troubled, the vessel was about to sink. Ybar and Patrick knelt in prayer ; but a voice from on high said, "It is not you who should pray, but Abban. His prayer will put to flight this apparition from hell, and his virtue is hereafter to be invoked on the sea." Abban was then the patron of mariners, and he watched over them amid the fearful dangers of unexplored worlds and mysterious oceans ; yet we do not find that he gained this glorious prerogative by labors on the sea.

Patrick, on the contrary, made many voyages ; we have said so already, but we have not related what tradition has preserved of the wonderful history of his voyages.

The angel Victor bade the slave of Milcho pass the sea.* He placed his foot on a rock, where the holy imprint has remained, and crossed the strait. At a later date, with the leave and blessing of his master, St. Germanus, he left Gaul,† and for long years visited the isles of the Mediterranean. It was in one of these isles that he met three other Patricks, leading a cenobitical life in a cave. To join this evangelical society a trial was needed. Patrick came forth triumphantly, overcame the monstrous beast that guarded the fountain, and remained there seven years. A more extraordinary and glorious adventure awaited him elsewhere.

He was again in an island.‡ There dwelt, in an apparently new abode, two spouses, in the bloom of youth and beauty, with a woman so old, so broken, that she was bent to the very ground ; she could no longer walk ; she crawled with difficulty on her hands. The

* Fiech, Hymn.

† Evinus, Vita Patricii.

‡ Id.

kind-hearted Patrick wondered, and at the same time pitied, this great and sad old age. Much surprised was he when his young host told him that this old woman was his grand-daughter, and that her mother was living ; and her mother, he added, is older and more decrepit. Then he related his history. "We lived," said he, "peacefully, devoted to works of mercy. Our house and our table were open to every traveller; and according to our power we gave to all who asked in the name of Christ. One day our Lord himself came in the guise of a pilgrim ; we received him as best we could, doing all that charity inspired ; but before departing, he revealed himself to us and blessed our abode ; and his benediction has preserved us in the bloom of youth. Our daughter was not then born. She is subject to the common law of flesh. As years increase, they weigh heavily over her head, and her daughter grows old like her. Jesus Christ," he added, "on departing, left us his staff, bidding us keep it for a pilgrim who would come many years after him, and who would convert Ireland." An inward voice disclosed to him that Patrick was that predestined pilgrim. The saint rejected the thought, but our Lord appeared to him. The staff of the divine pilgrim never more left Patrick's hand, and we see in all the legend the wonderful prodigies which it accomplished among the Irish.

In the very bosom of the Mediterranean, in the very bosom of the Provençal gulf, so enlightened, and apparently so well known, between Marseilles and Rome, there was then room for discoveries and marvels. There were isles where saints of Erin, like Patrick, and many others before him, still more after him, were led by angels to find a sweet and silent asylum ; and when

we behold what occurred there, we are tempted to believe that these mystic lands, unknown and invisible to profane vessels, remained wrapped in some bluish haze, impenetrable and transparent, like the veil with which Homer's gods covered themselves amid men.

But it was rather towards the north, there where the unknown began so speedily, in seas so often vexed with storms, and almost ever veiled, where we almost feel the limits of the world, where we can believe that after the human zones another opens, reserved and mysterious, — there especially was it that they steered their hardy barks, or that the tempest hurried them; there that they sought inaccessible and undiscovered retreats.

Twice had Corbmach vainly tried to find an island, one of those tall, rugged rocks, where saints love to live alone and exalted, like the birds of ocean, between the sea and sky.* In his third attempt he was assailed by mortal perils. For fourteen days and fourteen nights had his bark, at full sail under the impetuous blast of the south, rushed straight to the north.† He passed the limits of human navigation, and it seemed as if there was no return for him. On the fourteenth day the nameless terror of a monstrous and formidable world began to arise on every side. The sea swarmed with hideous beasts; they covered the surface, and dashing in thousands against his hide-covered creel, stopping and checking his paddles, they seemed each moment to invade and overwhelm the voyagers whom they menaced to engulf in these horrible and living billows. This was only one of his dangers. Who can relate the rest?

* Egress Brendani.

† St. Adamnan, Vita Columb.

Nor, after all, was it necessary to go very far to find monsters. They were felt passing in the very waters of Ireland. Were they not, too, sometimes even seen? "My son," said Columbkille to Berach,* "if thou goest to-day to Ethica, take a circuit, and shun the deep coast, rather the little isles, lest thou be alarmed at the prodigies from which thou shalt hardly escape." Berach set out with the saint's blessing and advice, but he slighted the latter; and when he was off Ethica, a beast arose from the sea like the leviathan of Scripture; scarcely could Berach, furling his sail and bending to his oars, escape the yawning maw that opened like the crater of that living mountain, or even the waves that his passage raised, like a hurricane. On the same day Baithen sailed in the same waters; and him, too, Columbkille had told that he should see the leviathan. "Last night," said he, "he rose from the depths of the sea, and to-morrow he will appear on the surface between Ethica and Iona." "He and I," replied Baithen, "are in the hand of the Almighty." "Go," said the holy abbot, "thy trust has saved thee." When the monster appeared, Baithen rose intrepidly amid his awe-struck comrades, stretched out his hands, and blessed it. The monster sank to his deepest cave, and the troubled waters grew calm.

Thus sailed, in search of lost and savage islands, the cenobites and anchorets, whom a long and fervent practice of asceticism had prepared to wrestle with mortal anguish, to enjoy the sublime and dangerous delights of absolute solitude. Before starting, they had for the last time measured their strength, consulted their con-

* St. Adamnan, *Vita Columb.*

science and God, in redoubled fast and prayer. If they were truly called, Ocean reserved for them one of his mysterious cells. Some day their bark discovered it ; then, with a narrow rock beneath their feet, the measureless ocean around, the infinite heaven above, their soul might forget earth, and float in spiritual regions. They had only to give their thought to the wind that eternally lashed their asylum, and passed over their burning brow, to the tireless, countless, endless waves that rolled at their feet. Whence came these winds and these waves ? Whither did they go ? Where were men ? Where was the earth ? The anchoret was lost in immensity. This was a real solitude, melancholy for earthly souls, heart-breaking, fearful even, and ill omened. But these ecstatic souls bore it unmoved ; there they abode, without weakness, without regret, without troubles, without fear ; these strong hearts, far from shrinking and breaking, dilated. The infinite was not too great for them. The spirit alone lived in them, and in the spirit lived alone thoughts divine.

In the legend Ireland appears surrounded by a circle of islands, forming a holier halo to the Isle of Saints, a sort of radiant glory, where all mystic splendors blend. Some distant rays of a world where shines a purer and more dazzling light seem to glimmer in this splendor.

In fact, beyond this indefinite archipelago, peopled with living and mortal saints, another archipelago began. As you receded from the coasts of Ireland, and the countries abandoned to human society, the cenobites are more perfect, the anchorets more disengaged from humanity ; nature changes her aspect and modifies her laws ; more monstrous beings appear ; we feel that the region of spirits is nigh, that we touch the frontier of

another world ; we even meet the van of these mysterious people. As ever, the evil spirits are in the front ; but if the demons and the damned appear, the angels and the elect are not far off ; if hell is on the one side, on the other is paradise. There was, and the saints knew it, the land of promise. More than one sought it ; God, doubtless, had forbidden the path ; one of them half saw it. Surely he was the greatest amid his brethren ; but his divine will is impenetrable ; others after him, who seem to us greater, tried to follow his traces ; like him they could but catch a glimpse. Otherwise can we suppose that, despairing of describing in human speech those happy kingdoms of the future, they have not attempted to do so ? or that God, revealing his works, set a seal on their lips ?

The first of these happy voyagers was Barnit ; the second was Brendan, son of Findloga, later abbot of Cluain-Fearth. From birth he had been marked for a high destiny. His mother, when she bore him in her womb, had seen her bosom filled with pure and brilliant gold, and her breasts shine with a dazzling light — expressive presage of the rich favors that Heaven was afterwards to shower on his servant, and the striking wonders that it should be given him to contemplate.

We will read the exact account of his voyage. We know already what Ithaca these Ulysses pursued, and on what seas their ship was to pass ; and we may form in advance some idea of that monastic and spiritual Odyssey, so famous in Irish legend.

If we test it by the criticism with which we ordinarily analyze poems, it will not be difficult to distinguish in the legend the origin and historic reality from the mystic and wonderful part.

Brendan was one of the most illustrious chiefs of the Irish church. Thousands of monks were grouped, serried around him, or scattered at intervals, isolated or in colonies, forming a people of ascetics. Afar, perhaps, he governed other monasteries and other cells. Doubtless he sometimes visited his province. It was, moreover, a general custom in the church, and especially in Ireland, to undertake pious voyages, to go and seek around, and even afar, examples and subjects of edification. Abbots who wished to practise and teach its best rules and the most perfect life went from monastery to monastery, and the disciples who did not follow the master profited, on his return, by what he had seen and learned. The purity and unity of discipline were thus preserved, as well as the efficacious and fruitful communion of saints.

St. Brendan's voyage is one of these visits, or one of these pilgrimages. We know how wonderful is that land of Erin; how fertile in prodigies that sea that washes and indents its shores; how lively the imagination of that naturally poetic race, now exalted by Christian spiritualism. The scenes of the voyage were soon idealized. The isles multiplied, receded, became less familiar. Men disappeared, a mysterious hospitality welcomed the voyager. If visible, their sanctity is purified and refined; their mouth utters, their ear hears, only the praise of the Almighty. God nourishes them by the secret ministry of his angels, and their spirits, maugre the earthly tenement that still encases them, communicate like pure spirits. Eternal flowers, unknown and delicious fruits, ripen for the servants of God; day obscured by no shades of night, sweetened and tempered only by transparent veils, that come to

repose the weary eye of the saints. And in the fresh and brilliant meadows, under the fragrant and nutritous trees, is endless chant, is tireless procession, holiday, and ceremony, that nought comes to interrupt. It is, in a word, the ideal of the virtues and pleasures of the church, the earthly paradise of the cloister.

Yet the Irish monks dreamed better still. Beyond these isles, abode of perfection and present felicity, they dreamed for their brethren to come a still holier and happier land. We have already seen that they durst not describe it; but it was necessary at least that a glimpse should be given, its existence vaguely indicated to future generations, its sweetness and its riches; they led Brendan thither; none worthier than he of such an honor; and he it was who offered the church of his day the first fruits of the good things that the future church was to possess. This mysterious country, that served as an intermediary between earth and heaven, between time and eternity, between the world of body and the world of spirit, was bounded, too, by the darksome and painful zones of hell; and Brendan, under the hand of Providence, which misled, and yet directed him, perceived and described some advanced isles of the infernal regions; their fearful noise, their corroding emanations, reached him.

With these exclusively monastic and Christian conceptions blend the popular imaginings. Strange and monstrous creatures pass around the voyagers, attack or defend them. On distant rocks they found dangers that seemed to show that a malignant power dwelt there, spreading its snares; other marvels, too, — palaces or churches of crystal and marble, founded on the sea, and plunging in its depths the columns of their gi-

gantic peristyles ; in the very ocean interior splendors issued from its measureless depths, changing its waves to billows of light ; this too the legend tells.

We might go farther back, and follow higher still the origin of these fancies ; we might at least for some of them. This western land, this Irish Atlantis, was it America, seen dimly through the prism of poesy ? This oceanic architecture of marble and crystal, was it not the account brought back by Ireland's hardy fishers from their cruises towards the polar ices ? Do not these unceasing days light up the arctic regions ? But of what avail such an exegesis ? Poesy gives no account of what it borrows ; and if great works are condemned by their greatness to undergo this anatomical dissection, we may at least spare the humble creations of the legend.

In these fantastic conceptions, these religious imaginings, there was matter for an epic, where cloistral and popular poesy should unite. Has this epic found its Homer ? Have these ideas and traditions ever been gathered in a composition of just extent. The question is addressed to the men of Ireland, who love the ancient days, study, and their country.

Listen, meanwhile, to Capgrave, or probably to John of Tynemouth, whose work the learned say he merely edited ; he gives an abridged account of Brendan's voyage. It is not merely insufficient and too short ; it is evidently mutilated and garbled, and fragments torn from the work are found here and there in the legends.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ST. BRENDAN'S VOYAGE.

BRENDAN was one of the most perfect among the saints. His childhood had been formed by St. Mida, his youth instructed by Ercus ; and he already directed many disciples, when God inspired him to travel. He desired that God should give him a land isolated in the midst of the sea, and far from men. While in these thoughts, a voice from on high spoke to him in his sleep. "Brendan, servant of God," said he, "know that the Lord has heard thy prayer." Then there came to him a saint of the name of Barnit, to whom the Lord had revealed great things during his voyage, and Brendan said to him, "Relate to us the word of the Lord, and console our soul by the story of the wonders thou hast seen found worthy for thy virtue to see in the waters of ocean." And Barnit began to speak to him in these terms : "My son Mernocat, who was in my monastery procurator of the poor, stole away one day, and fleeing far from my face, and wishing to lead a solitary life, he found an isle in the sea, and dwelt there. Long after I was told that he had around him numerous disciples, and that the Lord had revealed great wonders by him. I went to him. One night that we were watching together and rambling over his island, my son led me to the banks of the sea on the western coast. A bark stood there, and he said to me, 'Enter this bark with

me, father, and let us sail to the west ; there is there an island called the Land of Promise, and it is the abode that God has destined to those who will come after us in the last times.' We began to sail. Thick clouds soon covered us ; I could hardly discern the prow of our bark ; but at the end of an hour or so, an immense light shone around us, and a land appeared. It was great, full of grass and fruits. For a fortnight we journeyed there. Every plant hung with flowers, every tree with fruit ; the very stones were precious. On the fifteenth day we came to a river flowing from the east to the west. We knew not what to do ; we wished to reach the opposite shore, and yet we awaited the will of Heaven, when, suddenly, a being of human form, but all radiant, appeared before us. Saluting us by name, he said, ' Courage, worthy brethren ! The Lord has revealed to you the land that he is to give to his saints. The river that you see divides it in twain ; but you cannot touch the farther shore : return now whence ye came.' When he ended, we asked his name, and whence he was. ' Why ask who I am, and whence I come, and not question me as to this island ? Such as you see it has it remained since the beginning of the world. Do you feel any want of eating, drinking, or clothing ? You have been a year in this country without feeling the wants of the body ; sleep has not weighed you down, night has not infolded you. Here shines an eternal day ; blind darkness is here unknown, for Christ is our light.' Then we set out to return, and he left us to return to that isle of bliss."

This story awakened Brendan's imagination. Then, with quick resolve, choosing four of his three thousand disciples, he confided to them his project of going in search of that land of saints, and took them as his com-

rades. For six weeks they fasted, breaking the fast only every third day. On the fortieth day, they ascended a mountain's top, and there built the bark that was to bear them. It was very light, but solid, with a deck supported by posts; they covered it with well-tanned ox hides, and carefully pitched the seams. Two similar coverings were kept in reserve, and they took provisions for forty days. Finally they erected and solidly planted the mast, and made the sail and rest of the rigging.

Then St. Brendan ordered his brethren, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to embark. As he had remained alone on the bank, and blessed the spot of their departure, three brothers came from the monastery, and fell at his feet, saying, "Father, permit us to follow thee whither thou goest, or else we are resolved to die here of hunger and thirst." Seeing them thus pressing and offering violence, the saint bade them enter, saying, "Brethren, your will be done;" and he added, "This one has adopted a happy resolution, for God has prepared a place suitable for his soul; but he reserves a terrible judgment for the other two." When he had embarked, they unfurled the sail, and began their voyage, steering towards the summer solstice. The wind was favorable, and they had merely to hold the sail.

After a fortnight the wind fell, and they took their paddles till their strength was spent. Brendan encouraged them, saying, "Fear not, for God watches over us, and he guides our bark; trim the sail, and let her float; God will do what he will with his servants and his bark." They knew not to what part of the world the vessel bore them. Every evening they took some food; forty days had elapsed; their provisions were exhausted;

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then an island appeared to them full of towering rocks. From the midst of this isle many streams ran down to the sea. The brethren, exhausted with hunger and thirst, wished, even before they found a landing place, to dip up water ; but Brendan said, " Beware, brethren ; what you would do is mad. God has not yet deigned to show you the port, and you wish to steal. In three days our Lord will show a spot where we may land, and where the wearied shall regain their strength." For three days they coasted around the island, and on the third, about the ninth hour, they found a port where there was room only for one vessel.

When they had landed, and were walking along the shore, a dog, trotting down a path, came to Brendan's feet. Following it as a guide, they entered a town, where they found a great hall, with beds and seats, and water to wash their feet. And while they rested the man of God warned them, saying, " Take care, lest Satan lead you into temptation ; for I see that at this moment he instigates one of you three, who followed us from the monastery, to a shameful theft. Pray for his soul, for his flesh has already been delivered to the power of Satan." Now, the house where they were was full of jars, hanging by the wall, of all different metals ; there were, too, bits and horns, mounted with silver ; and Brendan added, " Let us eat the meats which our Lord has prepared for us." Then they sat, and nought was wanting at their board. Rising, they went to their beds, which were all ready, to rest after their great hardships. But while they slept, Brendan saw a child, black as an Ethiop, holding a bit, and playing before the unfortunate brother, in whose eyes he made it glitter. The saint arose, and passed the night in prayer till day.

Two days, by the divine will, they rested on that isle. Then they returned to the ship, when Brendan said, "See, brethren, does not one of you carry off something from here?" "God forbid," they replied, "that a robbery should dishonor our voyage." Then said St. Brendan, "Behold, our brother, whom I warned yestereve, has now in his robe a silver bit that the devil gave him this night." The brother instantly flung the bit on the ground, and fell at the feet of the man of God, crying, "Father, I have sinned : pardon ! pray for the salvation of my soul." And all at the same moment fell down to pray for the salvation of his soul. Rising up, they saw the wretched Ethiop escape from the guilty man's bosom, howling and crying, "Why drive me, O man of God, from my abode?" Brendan immediately turned to the brother, and said, "Receive promptly the body and blood of Christ, for thy soul is about to leave thy body, and this is the place of thy burial." He received and died.

They were reëmbarking, when a young man came with a basket of bread and a jar of water. "Receive," he said, "this offering of thy servant. You have a long way to go ; the bread and water will not fail you till Easter." Thus they set out and sailed, eating every second day ; then coming to an island, they landed.

On getting ashore, they saw waters, which, coming from different fountains, formed a large current, full of fish ; and traversing the island, they found flocks of sheep, all white, and so numerous that they could be seen far off from the land. Brendan told them to take one to celebrate the feast, for it was now Easter ; and the one taken followed like a domestic animal. It was brought to the saint, and by his order a spotless lamb was also taken. At the same time, a man appeared,

holding a basket full of loaves, cooked under the ashes, with whatever was necessary to celebrate Easter, and laid it all at the feet of the man of God, saying, "Father, here you are going to celebrate the Sabbath; but tomorrow you will go into the island that you see; there the Lord wishes you to feast the day of his resurrection. I give you wherewith to supply your want till Pentecost. After the day of the resurrection of the Lord, you will sail to another island to the west; it is called the Paradise of Birds; there you will rest till the octave of Whitsunday."

After Whitsunday they sailed for three months, seeing nothing but sea and sky, eating once every two or three days; then they descried an island; but for forty days they sailed around it without being able to find a port. At last they found one, but it was very narrow. There were two fountains there, one turbid, the other limpid and clear. And as the brethren hastened to draw water, the saint stopped them, saying, "You cannot, without the permission of the fathers who inhabit this country. Will they not give you this water which you now wish to steal?" Then an old man of venerable mien advanced towards them. His hair was white as snow, and his countenance radiant. Thrice did he prostrate himself on the ground before Brendan; Brendan raised him up; they embraced. The old man took Brendan by the hand, and walked with him a stadium to the monastery. When they reached the door, Brendan asked his guide, "What is this monastery? Who governs it? Whence come the saints who dwell here?" The old man spoke not; but his thought answered, and miraculously penetrated Brendan's mind. Seeing this, he said to his brethren, "Hold your tongues in silence, lest our brethren be sullied by our dissipation."

Eleven brethren soon appeared, attired in copes, bearing the cross, and chanting, "O saints, arise from your abodes; go to meet the truth; sanctify the place; bless the people, and vouchsafe to keep thy servants in peace." At the moment that the verse finished, the father of the monastery embraced Brendan and his companions after him; his companions and the brethren also embraced each other. When they had thus given the kiss of peace, the travellers were led into the monastery; after prayer their feet were washed, while the antiphon, "Behold, I give you a new commandment," was chanted. Then their hands were washed; all sat down, and the table was prepared. Leaves of exquisite whiteness and roots of exquisite savor were served up. Each of the voyagers was placed between two of his hosts, and a whole loaf was set before each two.

After the meal the abbot of the monastery said to the strangers, "Brethren, you wished this morning to steal water from the fountain whose limpid waters you saw; but you may now draw thence at will, rejoicing in the fear of the Lord. The other fount, with its turbid waters, serves for our daily ablutions, for it is tepid all the year round. As to these loaves, we know not where they are prepared, nor how they are brought to us. It is an alms that God sends us by one of his obedient creatures. We are twenty-four brethren, and we have twelve loaves every day. To-day, in consequence of your arrival, the number has been doubled. Such are the presents that Christ has continued to bestow on us since the days of St. Patrick and St. Albeus. Eighty years have passed, and yet our body has not grown old in all that time. We have no need here of things prepared by fire. We suffer neither cold nor heat. When the hour of mass

or the offices comes, the candles that we brought from our own land light of themselves in the church, and by a divine disposition, they burn without ever diminishing."

Then rising, Brendan, and the abbot of the monastery, and the brethren with them, entered the church. It was square; the altars and all the vases were of crystal. Not a voice or a murmur was heard in all the monastery. If a brother had a question to ask, he went before the abbot, bending the knee, and speaking to him in his heart; the abbot understood him by a revelation from on high, and wrote his answer. When complins were ended, the abbot said to St. Brendan, "I attest, in the presence of Christ, that for the eighty years we have been on this island, we have heard the human voice only in the chant of praise which we address to the Lord. None of us has felt the miseries of the flesh, or the approach of the evil spirit who prowls around the human race." He said also, "Of the two brothers whom you know, one shall remain in the island of the anchorites; the other, by a shameful and lamentable death, shall be plunged into hell." While they thus conversed in the church, a fiery dart came from heaven, and all the candles that stood before the altar lit up. "You see," said the abbot, "these torches which burn; they consume not nor decrease, and the fire leaves no trace or mark, for it is wholly immaterial."

Brendan and the brethren finally reëmbarked, and after some weeks they saw an island, where they found a fountain, whose limpid waters were full of fish and various herbs. Brendan tasted it, and warned his brethren: "Drink cautiously; this water is dangerous." But they disregarded his word, and were seized with a sleep that lasted three days and three nights. Meanwhile,

the saint prayed unceasingly, asking pardon for the ignorance which had led them into this peril. At the end of the third day, God awakened them anew.

They resumed their course, and reached the isle where they had passed the vigil of Easter, and the one whom they had already seen came to meet them, saying, "Admirable in his saints is the God of Israel ; he will give his people fortitude and courage, blessed be He." He gave them new clothes, loaded their bark with provisions, and announced that they should find the promised land the seventh year of their voyage, and that God would take them back to the place of their birth.

One day, as they continued their voyage, they beheld an immense, monstrous beast appear, with foaming nostrils ; it hastened its rapid course, as if to devour them. The terror-struck brethren cried, "Deliver us, O Lord ; the beast devours us." Brendan encouraged them : "Fear not, men of little faith ; God is ever our defender ; he will deliver us from the monster's mouth, and from all other danger." The monster approached, waves of prodigious size rolling before him to the very ship. Brendan, seeing terror increase in the hearts of the brethren, raised his hands to heaven, and cried, "Lord, save thy servants, as thou didst thy servant David from the hands of Goliath, and Jonas from the belly of the whale." At the same instant, another beast, coming from the westward, passed them, and rushed on the sea monster, vomiting flames ; and the beast that pursued the servants of God remained dead, torn in three parts. By Brendan's order the brethren took one, and it served them for food.

Then they came in sight of a certain island. "There are here, so to say," said Brendan, "three nations — the

children, the young, and the old ; and here must remain one of the brethren who joined us at the moment of our departure." This island was a plain, wonderfully smooth, like the sea ; not a tree was to be seen — nought that the wind could agitate. It was vast, and covered with white and purple fruit. There they beheld three troops, each separated from the other two by about a sling's cast ; they were constantly walking, sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another. One stopped and sang, "The saints shall go from virtue to virtue, and the God of gods shall be seen in Sion." When it finished, another stopped and sang, and the third in turn, and so on without stopping. The first, that of children, wore robes of dazzling white ; the second were arrayed in garments of hyacinth ; the third in red dalmatics. At sext they sang the *Miserere*, with other psalms, to the end ; and others again at nones ; and at vespers they sang again. When the chant was over, a cloud enveloped the island ; it was bright, yet the isle was veiled, and only the chant of hymns was heard, continuing till morning, at the hour of the nocturns, when the new psalms began. At dawn they changed again ; then they immolated the spotless lamb, and all came to communion. Then two young men approached with a basket full of fruit, and laid it on the ship, saying, "Behold fruits of the isle of the strong ; take them and give us our brother ; then go in peace." Brendan, calling him, said, "Embrace thy brethren, and go with those who claim thee. Happy was the moment when thy mother conceived thee, since thou hast merited to live in this company. Remember the good things which the Lord has bestowed upon thee ; go, and pray for us."

When he had departed with his new companions, the

brethren resumed their way, and at meal time Brendan took a fruit; it was of marvellous size and full of an abundant juice. He divided it among the brethren, and its taste was that of delicious honey. After that they fasted three days. Then, behold, a bird, of prodigious size, came flying towards them, bearing a branch of an unknown tree. The branch fell on Brendan's knees. It bore a cluster of enormous size, of a bright purple hue; the grapes were like apples, and it fed all the brethren. After another three days' fast, they perceived an island all covered with tufted trees, laden with fruit, like that brought by the bird, and of the same color. The branches, loaded with the fruit, bend to the very earth. There were no other trees in the island, and the whole country was perfumed like a hall filled with oranges. They stopped there forty days.

Then they tried the sea again, and suddenly beheld a griffin directing its flight towards them. It was already stretching out its claws to seize the servants of God; but, lo, the bird that had brought the branch plunged upon it and killed it. Its body fell into the waves before the eyes of the brethren.

Another time they saw all the sea lighted up; it was so transparent that they could fathom its abyss, and distinguish what was at the depths of its waters. They also beheld a tower reared from the sea above the clouds; it was surrounded by an open pavilion, with openings so large that the vessel could pass through. The pavilion had the brilliant whiteness of silver and the hardness of marble; the tower was of the most brilliant crystal, and when they entered the pavilion the sea itself seemed to be of crystal, so clear and transparent was it to its very depths. They went around this won-

derful monument : the tower was fourteen hundred cubits on each side ; and the fourth day they found, on the ledge of one of the openings, a chalice of the same material as the pavilion, and a patera of that of the tower. The man of God took them, saying, "They are presents of Christ, who has shown us these wonders."

They sailed eight days more, and they beheld a rocky isle ; not a tree, nor a blade of grass, and on all sides rose forges and iron workers. "Brethren," said Brendan, "my soul is in pain for this island, for I would not touch or approach it, and yet the wind drives us straight upon it." Indeed, they soon heard the mighty panting of the bellows, which made a noise like thunder, and the formidable blows of the sledges on the anvils at the depth of the echoing workshops. One of the workmen then came out by chance ; he was hairy, and as it were mingled with fire and darkness. At the sight of the servants of God, he returned to his companions, and Brendan cried, "Put off, my brethren ; let us fly this island." Already he who had seen them returned bearing in his enormous tongs a mass of burning, immense seething iron, and he hurled it with violence. It did no harm to the saints, for it passed over their heads and fell more than a stadium beyond, and where it fell the sea boiled up as though a mountain of fire had entered its bosom ; the smoke poured up as from an oven. All the men of the island then flocked on the shore, armed with like masses, and they hurled them all, one after another, against the servants of Christ. Then they returned to their lairs, and their lairs at once burst into flames, and the whole island seemed on fire. The sea around the ships and afar, heated, vexed, seethed, like the water in a vessel over a raging fire. The howls of

the island, and its fetid odor, reached the brethren. Brendan said, "Soldiers of Christ, let us rely on our faith and spiritual arms ; watch and be men, - for we are on the borders of hell."

The next day they saw, as in a transparent haze, a lofty mountain rising from the ocean, its summit lost in a dense smoke. A rapid wind drew them on. Then the survivor of the three brothers sprang out of the boat, and walked to the shore, saying, "Woe to me ! I am lost, father ; I cannot return to you."

A crowd of devils had already seized him, and were dragging him off. He was a prey to the tortures and flames that devoured him. Brendan cried out, "Woe to thee ! the end of thy life is an eternal death." At that moment the mountain top was descried ; it foamed and boiled, breathing in and out fire and flames, which were seen to ascend to the height of heaven, and descend again to the bowels of the mountain. The whole mountain, to its very base, to the sea itself, was like a flaming pyre.

On they sailed to another isle. Brendan said, "You are going to see Paul the hermit, who lives there without his corporal life being supported by any material food. We cannot enter the island without the permission of the man of God ; await my return." He landed alone ; the old man came to meet him, saying, "It is sweet and pleasing for brethren to dwell together." All the brethren then left the ship ; Paul embraced them, and saluted them by name. His hair, his beard, and the hair of his body covered him down to his feet ; by his extreme old age, it was white as snow ; he had no other garment, and only his eyes and part of his face could be seen. On beholding him, Brendan was

saddened, for he said in his heart, "Woe is me! I wear the habit of a monk; many have placed themselves under me to learn the monastic life; and behold, a man who in the bonds of the flesh is like an angel, and is uninfluenced by the miseries of the body." Meanwhile, the man of God answered his thoughts: "Venerable father, what great wonders God has shown thee that he has not revealed to the other fathers! and thou sayest in thy heart that thou art unworthy to wear the habit of a monk, when thou art greater than a monk. The monk lives and is clothed by the labor of his hands, and for the last seven years God has nourished thee and thine by his benefits. As for me, here I am on this rock, miserable and naked, like the bird that has only its plumage."

Then Brendan asked him how he had got there, when he came, and how long he had led that life. "I was nourished for fifty-five years," said Paul, "in the monastery of St. Patrick, and I kept the cemetery of the community. One day, a brilliant vision appeared to me, saying, 'To-morrow thou shalt go to the sea side; there thou wilt find a vessel; embark; it will bear thee to a spot where thou shalt await the day of thy death.' I set out on the seventh day; arrived in this island where thou seest me. About the ninth hour, another came to me with a fish and some twigs. I struck fire from a flint, and prepared my meal. Every third day my servant came thus from the sea, and thus I lived for thirty years. I feel no thirst; on the Lord's day a rock gave me a little water for ablution. At the end of thirty years, I discovered two grottos and a living fountain; and I have since lived sixty years with no other food than the water of the fountain. My life has already

lasted one hundred and fifty years, and according to God's promise, I here await the day when he shall judge me in this mortal flesh."

After that they sailed forty days, and as they drew nigh to an island, a fog enwrapped them, so thick that they could scarcely see each other. An hour passed thus, and they suddenly found themselves in a great light. Before them lay a spacious land, full of trees, loaded as it were with autumn fruit. For forty days they travelled through it, and saw no night; nor did they see the end of the country. Then they came to a large river, traversing the island, and a young man came to them, embracing them with great joy, saluting them by their names, and saying, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord; they shall praise thee forever and ever." And he said to Brendan, "This is the island that thou hast so long sought. Thou didst not find it immediately, because God wished to reveal to thee the wonders that he has hidden in the vast ocean. Return to the spot of thy birth, and bear with thee—for this is allowed—as many of these exquisite fruits and precious stones as thy vessel will hold. At a time still distant, when persecution shall come upon Christians, this land shall be shown to thy successors." He added, "that it was always thus rich and fruitful, and that it had no night, because Christ was its light."

Then Brendan loaded his vessel with the delicious fruits and brilliant stones of that happy country, and a favorable wind bore him back to his monastery.

CHAPTER XXIV.

STRANGERS IN IRELAND.

BEFORE St. Patrick many Irish had crossed the sea ; had gone into the great Christian countries, to ask or give lessons. Among the most illustrious, we have numbered Sedulius and Cataldus, for we do not speak here of those who, after studying at Rome or in Gaul, returned to labor for the propagation of the faith in their own country. Even in St. Patrick's day, the Irish church kept equally active exterior and interior propaganda.

Without, this propaganda was threefold, — faith, discipline, and study. It was borne especially to the Northern Isles, to Gaul, and the vast Sclavonic or German countries that stretched from the North Sea and the Baltic to the Danube and Alps. Spain and Italy especially felt Ireland's action ; but in those countries it was less important and less prolonged.

Between the Irish and the Cambrian Britons, there was a perpetual interchange of masters, lessons, books, and pupils. Together, they evangelized Armoric Britain ; we may say that they created and constituted its church. But when the time of the Saxons and Angles came, the Irish were forsaken by their allies ; the Britons would not open the gates of heaven to those who had driven them from their homes ; the Irish were alone the masters, the apostles of England. So, too,

with the Picts ; the Britons, perpetually and cruelly tormented by their savage northern neighbors, had made but little effort to communicate to them the blessings of the gospel. There, too, the schools and churches were, with few exceptions, founded by Irish hands ; and it was the Irish, too, who catechised the tribes of the Hebrides, Orcades, and Iceland. In France, they exercised over discipline and study an influence that Italy, too, felt. To the countries that formed the centre and heart of Europe, they bore at once faith, discipline, and learning. Such is an outline of the exterior labors of the Irish church.

The history of the intercourse of Ireland with the Britons of both Britains, the Anglo-Saxons and Picts, is in itself a long and interesting history ; it would form at least two or three important chapters in the history of the Irish church, or even in her legend ; we reserve it all ; we shall not treat of it in this volume ; we mention it here only to show that it is not overlooked. How the Britons furnished Patrick some of his co-laborers ; how, a little later, they sent Gildas to the succor of St. Olcan and St. Bridget ; how the masters of Britain, David, Nennius, Doccus, and Cadoc, formed saints who subsequently exalted so high the renown of the Irish church ; how, on one side, Moel, Mello, Rioch, Carantoc, Samson, and many others, left Britain to study in Ireland ; how, on the other, Irish masters taught in the great schools of Cambria, at Menevia, St. David's, in the valley of Roses, at Banchor ; how, finally, a double migration of saints from Great Britain and Ireland colonized, so to say, Armoric Britain, diffusing there the knowledge of the gospel and monastic institutions, — these long and manifold accounts are better

placed in a history of the Breton legend, where they develop at pleasure.

The Irish mission among the Anglo-Saxons, the part of the monastery of Iona, the history of the see of Lindisfarne, and the succession of its bishops, Aidan, Finnian, Colman, Tuda, and Cuthbert; the Irish, after a short struggle, falling back before the Roman missionaries and Wilfrid; the foundations and teachings of Fursey and Maildulf; the frequent and uninterrupted relations between the two churches; in fine, all that is told by the Anglo-Saxons, chroniclers and legends, — all this cannot be condensed in a single chapter, and belongs to the Anglo-Saxon annals, as well as to the Irish archives. The whole story may be found elsewhere.

A great part of the vast field where Irish activity was exerted is thus reserved; there remain the secondary isles of the north, France, Italy, and Central Europe. But in the isles of the north, and in almost all Central Europe, there were pagans to convert; the commission was Christian and apostolic; it was the propagation of the faith by preaching and martyrdom. In France, Italy, and some parts of the Rhenish land, the mission had another object and another character: it was the reform of discipline, the propagation of science, by example and instruction.

The legend has not exactly noted and remembered the long and many relations of Ireland's schools and masters with foreign countries; but it furnishes here and there interesting indications. It would not be easy, even combining all these scattered traits, to compose a whole — to trace a picture; many figures would be wanting, many lines broken. Some names and some

facts will suffice to establish the continuity, the tradition of Irish teaching abroad, and mark the importance which it must at certain moments have had.

Ireland, a remote province of Christianity, situated on the confines of the globe, and almost beyond Europe, might well form in its bosom, and spread over Europe, its numerous missionaries ; but it would not seem likely to call many strangers to its schools. Yet they came, not only from Brittany and England, but from Gaul and Italy.

The great luminaries that had enlightened the church of Gaul during the second half of the fifth century had sunk. Sidonius, Claudian, Mammertus, Faustus, Genadius, Avitus, Hilary, those heirs and continuators of the great age, had left only rare successors. Cæsar, Fortunatus, Felix, and Gregory could not fill their place. Hence, when the first rays from beyond the British sea reached the monks of Gaul, they embarked, and as early as the sixth century, we find them jostling with the swelling crowd that filled the monasteries of Ireland.* Agilbert, Bishop of Paris, in the next century, and one of France's greatest prelates, was a pupil of the Irish, and had spent many years among them in the study of the Holy Scriptures.† A Frank king, Daegberth, spent the years of his exile among them ; ‡ nor was it the only time that the Irish schools welcomed royal misfortunes, for English princes found, like Daegberth, a profitable hospitality in the monasteries of Erin

The Italians, too, so vain of their science, and so disdainful, had learned the road to Ireland. They had

* Vita Kieran, (Colgan.)

† St. Bede, Hist. Eccles.

‡ Hedd. Vita Wilfrid.

seen among them those bands of pilgrims come from afar to shut themselves up for fifteen or twenty years in the obscurity of retreat and the profoundest of studies. They had perhaps despised them at first; at least, they had not thought, at Rome, of confiding the apostolate of Ireland to them. Rome expected more of her own priests; but when Palladius, Salonius, and Sylvester, chosen and sent by her, had failed, — when, a little later, they learned the wonders that Patrick and his Irish mission had accomplished, with so prompt and marvellous a power, — they wished to see these laborers nearer, and in their work, and many travellers left Italy to visit the new church; there they found lessons that detained them, and preceptors that made Italy forgotten.

While St. Senanus was in the Island of Iniscara, where he built a monastery, there arrived, says one of his biographers,* a vessel loaded with pilgrims. They were fifty monks from Rome. They were divided into five bands, for a different vocation made them seek different masters; the first had come for St. Finnian, the second for St. Senanus, the third for St. Brendan, the fourth for St. Barry, the fifth for St. Kieran. They had similarly divided the labors of the way, and each band had assumed in turn the direction and working of the ship, putting themselves under the special protection of the saint whose renown had led them to undertake the voyage.

Women did not fear the dangers and hardships of these long pilgrimages, and the very example seems to have been given, the path opened, by them. "At that time," says a legend, "the daughters of the king of the

* Colgan, (8 March.)

Lombards, leaving their country and family for the love of God, came on a pilgrimage to Ireland. They were nine, and a daughter of the King of Britain came with them. Patrick gave them a place where they could lead a holy life, and there they abode till their death."

If in the sixth century, and Patrick's own day, Ireland, now Christian, and open to pilgrims of science and piety, beheld vessels from Gaul and Italy enter her ports, she doubtless subsequently received more numerous visits. Men came from regions more remote, from the very depths of Egypt.* Foreign nations sowed their bones on that holy land; but Ireland piously gathered them, and hospitable to the end, she inscribed the memory and merits of her guests in her prayers, as on her memory. If we believe certain traditions, they were not isolated travellers; it was not one ship, it was whole fleets, that landed on the Irish shores armies from France and Gaul, for a conquest or an invasion. "Holy pilgrims of Rome," says the Litany of Aengus, "who came in one hundred and fifty ships, following Natalis, Elias, Neman, and Corcnutan, pray for us."† "Holy strangers, who came to the number of five hundred and twenty from beyond the sea, under the guidance of Bishop Boethius," &c. When these expeditions arrived on the Irish coast, they may have well caused alarm.

Without taking literally the statistics swelled by pride or popular imagination, without believing in these vast armaments that the legend sends from the ports of the Mediterranean, the Channel, or the Atlantic, we may at least conclude, in default of other testimony, that a con-

* Eleran. Vita Patricii.

† Aengus, Litanis.

siderable intercourse grew up between the island and the continent, and that a twofold current at the same time carried the Irish abroad, and foreigners to Ireland. These testimonies abound in the Acts : to those already cited we might add many others, without, however, any great interest, and with little utility.

CHAPTER XXV.

IRISH MASTERS ABROAD.

THE Irish, in fact, did not wait to be sought in their island. If disciples went in search of masters, masters went in search of disciples. From the fifth century to the twelfth, holy and learned men, formed in the insular schools, brought to the continent their zeal and light; and from Fridolinus to Marianus, names more or less illustrious in science and the church perpetuated abroad the tradition of Irish studies and discipline.

For all these masters were at the same time saints. In that age of true Christianity and true spiritualism, science gave sanctity, and sanctity science: at least, one prepared for the other. Men studied to perfect their souls. Man had not then been divided, to put on one side conscience, virtue, divine aspirations, and on the other reason, knowledge, human pretensions; the soul on one side, the spirit on the other. The mind was elevated by the progress of the soul, the soul profited by the labors of the mind: they were two united forces, directed towards a single object by a being who had no war in himself, and arrived simultaneously at good and science, that is, at salvation and God. Their science was obscure and limited. What then? They desired, sought, and loved it, not for its own sake, for of itself it is nothing, but because it is at once the way of truth, of good, and of God. They had not science, but they

had what is better, the spirit of science. Still less did they think of making science a means of earthly and material enjoyment, the mind a vile servant of the body. Who would have dreamed, in these truly religious schools, of thus profaning the purest, most divine instrument that man has to work the salvation of his soul? The history of their whole life would not suggest such a thought; and the mere introduction of this idea and this question in these pages seems a strange anachronism, an offensive blunder. Such were the teachers that Ireland sent forth; and if, among those whose names shall be cited, a single one seems to form an exception, he shall be carefully pointed out.

The history of such a teaching would surely be of great interest, and would embrace high and salutary instruction. To follow these men through their whole life; to hear the thoughts of their meditations and the word of their lessons; to see them forming themselves and forming others; to learn how they could so indissolubly unite the training of the mind and the forming of the soul; how they taught and practised the science of salvation, for them the science of sciences, not because it is the greatest, but because it is the end of all, the divine synthesis, as it were, that contains and completes them,—this would be a moral study, outweighing far chapters of literary history. Such a book, written by one of the masters of Christian spirituality, would be a supplement to the *Following of Christ*.

It would be interesting, too, to reconstruct the purely scientific part of their teaching, and give the exact state of Irish science. They say little who define the science of the middle ages by the formula of the seven liberal arts. This was only a programme. Each age,

each school, each master, understood, explained, and developed it in his own way, and according to the scope of his mind and his learning. If the differences were not so great, the progress as prompt, as regular as might be desired, they were appreciable ; their very fluctuations are not devoid of interest.

Yet the legend could not satisfy so much curiosity : it is not so profound and so learned ; it has been satisfied with bequeathing us the names of some of those who bore abroad the lessons they had received at home ; it has not given us the secrets of their consciences, analyzed their lessons ; it has not counted their steps, nor always the works created by their hands.

In the fifth century, Fridolinus began in Gaul the reputation of the new masters. In the following age, St. Gall, in the heart of the Helvetic Mountains, founded the great school which bore his name, while Columban filled all Gaul and Italy with his renown. In the seventh, Chrauding and Dicuil founded their monasteries in Belgium and Burgundy ; worn out with journeys and ecstasies, St. Fursey reposed at Lagny, and created there, before his death, a flourishing house.

Livinus, in the eighth, established himself in Friseland ; and later, John, Albinus, Clement, illumined with their light the end of that century and the commencement of the next ; and with them we must count the no less learned nor less celebrated Dungal. Then came another John, the famous Erigena, who held near Charles the Bald the rank that Alcuin did with Charlemagne. Then Probus, who directed the strides of St. Alban at Mentz ; and those labors excited the interest of the whole learned church. In the tenth, Kaddroe, first monk at Fleury, then abbot of Wasor, and finally

of St. Clement's at Mentz. At Wasor, Forannan had preceded him. Finally, in the eleventh century, Marianus, with his companions, illustrated successively with his sanctity and learning Cologne, Fulda, Ratisbonne, and Mentz.

These are only the most illustrious : who could count the disciples who followed them, or came to seek them from the heart of Ireland, and who succeeded them in the direction of their monasteries ? Who could count the houses conducted, founded, peopled, by the Irish ? Luxeuil, St. Gall, Bobbio, were, in France, Switzerland, and Italy, the most celebrated and flourishing of these colonies ; but how many others arose and prospered in the Alps, in France, in the Low Countries, in Germany ? Open the Martyrology and seek those who came to cast on a foreign soil the seed of their virtues and learning ; their names fill the page. And for one name preserved how many are lost ! What studies ignored, what merits unknown, what sanctity less perfect or more concealed ! Beneath the names that survive and float on the surface, there are waves of names overwhelmed and lost.

When Clement and Albinus arrived in France, in 791, Charlemagne was already endeavoring to infuse life into languishing studies ; at least he thought of it. "At that time," says an author,* "two Scots from Ireland landed in France with some merchants from Great Britain. They were men of incomparable erudition in sacred and profane learning. They exposed nothing for sale, displayed no merchandise, but they cried to the crowd that flocked around to purchase, "If any man wishes wisdom, let him come and apply to us, for we sell

* B. Nother, the Stammerer.

it." "They said this," adds Notker, quaintly, "because they saw people take only what was sold, and they thus urged them to take wisdom with the other things, or else wished to surprise and strike their minds." They cried out thus for a long time; men wondered, and thought them mad, till at last the tidings reached the ears of King Charles. An eager lover of wisdom, he made them come in haste, and asked them whether it was true, as report stated, that they bore learning with them. "We have," they replied; "and in the name of the Lord we are willing to communicate it to those who seek it worthily." He then asked what they sought in exchange. "Give us," they replied, "a place for our abode, disciples of good understanding, and what strangers need — food and clothing." Charles's heart was filled with joy; at first he kept them near him; but later, when harassed by all kinds of wars, he decided that Clement should remain in France, confiding to him a certain number of children of all ranks, whom he placed in suitable positions, and for whose maintenance he provided. As to Albinus, he sent him to Italy, and gave him the monastery of St. Augustine, near Pavia, to receive all who might wish to study under him. Then it was that Alcuin, from Great Britain, seeing that Charles thus royally welcomed the learned, also came to France. Vincent of Beauvais, who repeats this account in his *Historical Mirror*, adds that another Irishman, named John, was with Claudius, Clement, Alcuin, and Rabanus, one of the founders of the school of Paris. Dungal was in France at the same time,* and we still possess the letter which Alcuin drew from him in regard to an eclipse; for it seems

* *Spicilegium Dacherii.*

that the Irish were authorities especially in astronomy ; the great disputes with regard to Easter had doubtless led them to study profoundly all that related to time and its divisions. On some points they outstripped opinions generally received in the church. Virgil came to France in the time of King Pepin.* The Frank monarch, charmed with his learning, kept him two years at his court, and then permitted him to join Winifred's mission on the Rhine. There, too, were Dubdan, Clement, and Sidonius, laboring under the orders of the great Archbishop of Mentz. It was a valiant and active mission ; churches and schools were erected ; they preached the gospel, but they wrote, discussed, while awaiting the trial of the confessor, or the triumph of the martyr. A discussion arose between Virgil (Feargal) and Boniface (Winifred) with regard to the antipodes. Virgil admitted them, Boniface condemned the idea as heretical. Pope Zachary was appealed to. He judged against science for faith,† which the question scarcely touched ; the Saxons and the Romans triumphed ; but Ireland, though condemned, was right. The Saxons should have continued at the school of their old masters, and even Rome could have learned something there.

We have seen with what admiration Kaddroe's scientific acquirement inspired his Belgian biographer. The author of the *Life of Chrauding* pays a similar testimony. "Chrauding," says he, "was versed in astronomy — a science much cultivated among the Irish. He had at first been abbot at Tholey ; then leaving his nephew,

* *Vita Virgilii*, (Messingham.) Ware, *De Scriptoribus Hiberniæ*. Canisius, *Antiq. Lect.*

† This is a mistake. Hansizius, *Germania Sacra*, 83.

Chroduin at the head of that monastery, he came and founded another in the forest of Argonne, at Wasor, with privileges which he had obtained in person at Rome. There he became inclined to a solitary life, and built a cell at some distance from Wasor. On holidays he came to visit his monks. At other times, too, he came in the stillness of night, went through the monastery, examining all to correct whatever might offend his severe and watchful eyes. Towards cockcrow, guided by Arcturus, Lucifer, or some other star announcing the day, he withdrew unperceived, and returned to his desert. There he passed his life in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual canticles; there he contemplated, at leisure, that heaven whose brilliant mysteries he knew so well. He went further, says the legendary; and while he dwelt perforce among men, he lived already with the angels. After toil, repose; after action, revery; after a laborious and practical life, the contemplative life; it is the genius of Ireland; she bore it every way with her."

This Irish sanctity, ascetic and studious, laborious and ecstatic, mingled, too, with austerity and tenderness, had I know not what sympathy that quickly gained the heart. It naturalized itself easily, and churches new and old adopted it without difficulty. The masters and apostles from Ireland were soon honored; their disciples preserved their memory in veneration, and rarely left to others the care of perpetuating it. Their history was compiled; they were celebrated in hymns. "I send you," said Balther to Notker, "some verses which I have composed, with music, in honor of St. Fridolin."* At the same time, he wrote his life,

* Balther, *Vita Fridolini*.

which had already found more than one biographer. He had adopted him as his patron saint, and associated him in his devotions with the great St. Hilary.

How, indeed, could men fail to love the touching and smiling grace which they maintained amid barbarous tribes, amid the toils and perils of the apostolate? Livinus, lost in the marshes of the Escaut, at the mercy of the pagans, with a speedy death before his eyes, still exchanged with the nearest monasteries lovely verses, where an elegant playfulness mingles in sweet melancholy with the presentiment of martyrdom.

*Impia Barbarici gens exagitata tumultu
Hic Brabanta furit, meque cruenta petit.
Quid tibi peccavi, qui pacis nuntia porto?
Pax est quod porto; cur mihi bella moves?
Sed quâ tu spiras feritas sors læta triumphi,
Atque dabit palmam gloria martyrii.*

Then addressing Floribert, abbot of St. Bavo :—

*Et pius ille pater cum donis mollia verba.
Mittit et ad studium sollicitat precibus.
Ac titulo magnum jubet insignire Bavonem;
Atque leves elegos esse decus tumulo.
Nec reputat, fisso cum stridet fistula ligno,
Quod soleat raucum reddere quassa sonum.
Exigui rivi pauper quam vena ministrat
Lasso vix tenues unda ministra opem.
Sic ego, qui quondam studio florente videbar
Esse poeta; modo curro pedester equo.
Et qui Castallo dicebar fonte madentem
Dictæo versu posse movere Lyram,
Carmine nunc lacero dictant mihi verba Camœnæ;
Meneque dolens lætis apta nec est modulus.
Non sum qui fueram festivo carmine lætus:
Qualiter esse queam, tela cruenta videns? **

* Usher, *Hibern. Epist. Sylloge.*

Livinus was not mistaken : he soon received his crown. Never, doubtless, did heathen earth drink in the blood of a gentler martyr.

More frequently than in other nations, perhaps, were blended in the Irish ecclesiastical science and evangelical sanctity, the elegance of mind, the graceful imagination, the tender heart, the truly Christian suavity, that spiritual sweetness that gives such an attractive, absorbing, sympathetic charm to some figures in the legend. This affectionate and poetic attraction is one of the characteristics of Irish sanctity. The passionate impetuosity which we have noted sometimes, doubtless appeared, and escaped in sallies. In the history of the missions, as in the interior of the church, examples are to be found. Helias governed the monastery of St. Martin and St. Pantaleon, at Cologne, when he was informed that Peregrinus, the archbishop, deceived, doubtless, by the false reports of envy, was coming to drive the Irish and their abbot from the city. The soul of Helias revolted. "We are strangers," he cried, "but Christ is in us, and by this truth Peregrinus will never enter Cologne alive!" And God accomplished this vehement prophecy. But these violent blows which the Irish church had so frequently struck in the days of St. Patrick, had become very rare; nor was it by these means that it reformed Gaul, and converted Germany, but by unction, zeal, and charity.

We must, moreover, acknowledge it every where, among the Anglo-Saxons, among the men of Gaul, which never was a country of sanctity, like Ireland and England, ecclesiastical studies softened the hardness of souls, polished their rudeness, and gave minds an amenity that contrasts singularly with the manners and language of

contemporary barbarism. Among men cultivated at once by religion and science, sweet and pious friendships grew up; even afar they attracted and loved each other. Then it was a commerce of letters in prose and verse, books, prayers, fraternal sentiments, and counsels; they instructed each other, discussed questions, exchanged volumes, dedicated new works; the richer, too, at times sent aid to the poor — amiable and beneficent correspondence, of which traces remain in their prefaces and letters!

“Verses should be sent to poets,” wrote Walafrid to Probus; “to every merchant his merchandise, and to each one what he loves. To thee then, venerable Father, I send my poor poesy.” Then come innocent trifling and expressions of esteem, and the ordinary recommendation to read, transcribe, and send back soon the precious *Fortunatus*, which for him they kindly consent to expose all the dangers of travel and absence. Probus was the Latin name of the Irish teacher at Mentz. He was a learned man, zealous for the eternal salvation of the great geniuses of antiquity. “You do not tell us,” wrote Lupus, of Ferrieres, to Atwin,* “you do not tell us what Probus is doing, and I am tempted to be angry. Is he in the depths of some German forest, passing the seven arts in methodical review? or is he not rather finishing his satire? It would be pleasing to see how he manages to bring Virgil and Cicero into the number of the elect; for in his eyes they are men of perfect virtue; he does not wish, I believe, that Christ should have given his life in vain, or descended into hell to no purpose. And indeed does not the prophet say, ‘O death, I shall be thy death’?” &c.

* Epist. 20.

In the heart of Ireland, a letter came at times, to bear to the master, shut up in his school, news of the world, testimonials of the remembrance and solicitude of those who had known him, or esteemed, without personally knowing him. Such is Alcuin's letter to the learned Colga ;* he tells him that there are great troubles among the nations of the earth ; that Charlemagne makes war here and there ; he speaks to him of his health ; of that of Joseph, a fellow-countryman or a servant ; and he adds, "I send thee, good father, a little oil, for there is little to be found in your countries." He also sends him alms in money in his own name, and in that of Charlemagne, "both on behalf of me, Alcuin, and on the part of our lord the king." The two portions are carefully indicated, and Alcuin's is pretty large. "I know not what sins," he adds, "have merited for me not to see for so long a time the sweet letters of your paternity. Yet I cannot but feel daily that they are very necessary for me." And he asks his prayers.

We do not always find in these remote times, when the church was half stifled under the barbarism of nations, and even, if you will, we never find, eloquence and beauty of language. The style leaves much to desire ; taste may be often misled. The Irish were affected and obscure. This latter defect was almost characteristic among them ; there are pages and letters whose translation we are compelled to give up, and even abandon all idea of disentangling their inextricable involutions. Such is not the style of Columbanus, Patrick, Adamnan, nor of the masters. What is wanting in their language

* Usher, Vet. Epist. Hibern. Syllog.

is wanting in that of their contemporaries in all countries. But instead of this learned purity and Atticism of words, they have the Atticism of sentiment, the delicacy of intention, often, too, the graceful thought, the elegant idea ; and in the less classic language which they employ, something of their own mild and ingenious mind is sure to lurk.

We must not calumniate Erigena ; he is one of the glories of the middle ages ; but he must be distinguished from the holy masters. Erigena is not a saint ; he is not a legendary character, nor a figure in the Martyrology. During almost the whole ninth century, Ireland was a prey to the Danes ; nor did they cease to ravage it till they had planted there some peaceful and stable settlements. Many saints, masters, and bishops perished, like Maelcobh and Mochta ; others escaped, and among them Erigena. He went to France, where he spent many years. Then, if we believe William of Malmesbury, and the anonymous continuer of Bede, he went to die in the schools of King Alfred, assassinated by his scholars. But the two authors are mistaken ; Erigena's story is not so tragic. He lived, and probably died, in France, where his life was most calm.* He was one of the select table companions of Charles the Bald, a gay and condescending prince, and sparkling jests were freely exchanged across the board, if we believe some traditions, between the emperor and the Rabelais of the ninth century. Are we to take this last comparison literally ? Perhaps so. Rabelais would not have attempted to write on the body and blood of Christ, on predestination, nor even on the nature of things. He would not

* Acta SS. O. S. B. Sæc. IV. p. 11, præf.

have translated the Areopagite, nor studied how we see God. At least, Erigena was learned; he willingly laughed at table; he did better, we are told. He took the name of Macarius; and the choice of the pseudonyme may show a man inclined to the enjoyment of this world; but Ratram pretended that Macarius did not express enough, and that Baccharius would have been more appropriate; for the Irish scholar was drunk, he pretended, when he formed all his dreams. For he was not over-orthodox — let us note that. When his version of the Areopagite appeared, the pope required to see it. “He should have sent it to us,” said he, “and submitted it to our approbation. He is a learned man, and much spoken of; but I recollect that heretofore his doctrine was not pure on some articles.” A great framer of arguments, moreover, and terrible dialectician; skilful in spreading a snare, and full of exultation when his adversary was entrapped. When Berengarius, at a later day, took up the opinions of Erigena, he was pursued, combated without truce, struck down with redoubled condemnation; retirement, expiation, the sanctity of his later years, obtained a reluctant pardon. He was less fortunate than Erigena; more impassioned, doubtless, more believing, perhaps; he had Lanfranc against him, but no Charles the Bald for him.

Erigena is assuredly one of the most interesting personages of his day; but properly speaking, he does not belong to it, and his portrait is strange amid the saints that surround him. He resembles rather some men of the revival, than the Irish saints of his time. He is a pioneer, sent on by the spirit that was afterwards to preside over the studies, debates, heresies, innovations,

and discoveries of lay science. Erigena, it is well known, was neither a priest nor a monk.

This chapter does not contain the history of Ireland's science and teaching, or its masters abroad. It is not even sufficient to give an idea of it. Yet it is about all that the legend tells us on the point. We would fain know more. The more obscure the time, the darker the night, the rarer and paler are the gleams of light still perceptible, the more earnestly are eyes fixed on those gleams which are pledges and germs of the lights of the future, and of the great day that is to rise again. We follow with restless solicitude these men who guard and hand down the last shining torches, wavering though they be, and about to sink forever. We see in history how often light has vanished, how often it has been rekindled. Correctly speaking, there was not one, nor two, nor three, revivals after the barbarians; but rather for ten centuries, for eight, especially, — from the sixth to the fourteenth, — we see the last lights constantly extinguishing, and ever rekindling; disappear here, reappear there; fail, and then burst out again. The humblest or most forgotten among the masters of the middle ages kept and transmitted, on their part, and in their turn, some sparks of the heavenly fire; they have some right to our gratitude, and consequently, perhaps, to our interest.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ST. COLUMBAN.

AFTER Honoratus and the abbots of Lerins, after St. Martin and St. Hilary, after Cassian's Institutes and Conferences, the spiritual and monastic life had always been, in the church of Gaul, taught by able masters and practised by numerous disciples.* In the beginning of the sixth century, the rule of St. Benedict, established at Glanfeuil almost as soon as at Monte Cassino itself, came to accelerate the development of these holy institutions. The rules of St. Cesarius, St. Aurelian, and St. Ferreol raised up new associations.

From the fifth century the Irish had mingled in this great movement; but it was in the beginning of the seventh that immigration became more important, their action more distinct, their influence stronger. Then the Irish establishments were so multiplied, so prosperous, so famous and renowned, as to enable the rule of Columban to dispute with that of Benedict, the church, and especially France; they would perhaps have divided it, if the Irish had not had Rome against them on account of the disputes as to Easter and the tonsure.

Were we writing the history of the Irish church, we should perhaps try to enumerate all the establishments

* Fleury, *Histoire Ecclesiastique*.

created by her in Ireland itself ; we should try to count those which she created in the northern countries, in Gaul, Italy, and Central Europe ; we should have to recount at length (for it would be a long chapter) the monasteries constructed by Columbanus, the disciples formed by him, and the houses which they founded in their turn ; his difficulties with bishops, his negotiations with synods, his observations addressed to popes ; his struggles against princes ; the causes, pretexts, and hardship of his proscription. We should have to examine his rule, compare it with that of St. Benedict, seek whether one was substituted for the other, or whether they were naturally founded insensibly together, and at what epoch the Irish legislator's name was effaced from the codes that ruled continental monasticism. What we have to say is less long and less difficult. We consult only the legends, and what we borrow will perhaps suffice to give an idea of the labors of Columban, and of the spirit that Ireland bore in the mission which she accomplished among Christian nations, and in the very bosom of the church.

The genius of Ireland was multiform and diverse. If it had the sentiment of prayer, taste for poetic narrative, the enthusiasm of mysticism, and the spirit of vision, it had also the sense of rule, and that firmness of conception and management which creates, organizes, and preserves. It produced not only ascetics, poets, and visionaries, but also founders. The former represented it in the ideal or marvellous regions of the legend ; it is the last, and above all the rest St. Columban, that represent it in history.

Taking the word *legend* in the mystic and poetic meaning, Columban is not a legendary personage. His

name, doubtless, is an emblem ; it is that of the saint of Iona ; but Columban himself in vain recalls the sweet symbol ; he was not the dove of the cloisters. He was too vehement to be so tender, too agitated to be so recollected, too tried to be so radiant. His genius, like his mission, was different. Had he remained in Ireland, we should perhaps now see him in the floating atmosphere, the golden, half-transparent light, in which legendary Ireland is enveloped with her saints ; ecstasies and miracles would have filled his life or his biographer's narrative ; but Gaul, at that time, did not resemble Ireland ; it was the centre of movement and life for new nations. There men were in the heart of Europe ; they lived in the broad light of day, they belonged to history ; and history was already drawing up annals which were not legends, and works that were more than legends. Brunehilde, the French kings, the Austrasian and Neustrian *leudes*, are dramatic figures perhaps, but unquestionably not legendary. Columban is then, above all, by his works, by the very narrative of his biographer, as by his character and genius, an historic personage.

It was in Leinster that he was born and spent his early years ; but he soon left his country. A venerable old man, Selen, was his first master ; thence he passed under the discipline of Comgall at Banchor. There he remained for long years, and when he wished to set out, the separation was painful ; it was hard for the venerable Comgall, says Jonas, to renounce such company, to deprive himself of such a consolation.

He set out with twelve companions ; he landed in Armorica, and thence penetrated into Gaul.* On ac-

* Jonas, *Vita Columbani*.

count of the frequent wars, says Jonas, of the continual passage of enemies, or perhaps also by the negligence of bishops, religion seemed to have lost all its force and virtue there. A vast career opened before him. He could choose and mark his work. He might, like Clement, Albinus, and Dungal, at a later date, labor for the diffusion of science; he might teach the laws of the monastic life such as he knew it to be practised in Ireland; he might, finally, crossing the Rhine and following the footprints of Rupert, go and bear the gospel amid pagan tribes. Instead of choosing one of these three missions, he undertook all of them; he was at once doctor, reformer, founder, and apostle; he taught the whole church by his word and his writings; reformed the cloisters by promulgating and establishing his rule; and finally he evangelized the Suevi; and had not God called him to himself, would have extended his apostolate to the Slavonians.

He crossed the land of the Gauls from west to east, on foot, bearing on his shoulders the volume of the Holy Scriptures, meditating in himself or discoursing with his companions. He stopped amid the Vosges. There spread wide deserts, the lair of wolves, the refuge of robbers; the cave of a bear was his first shelter; before founding his edifice he once more wrought it in his mind. Then suddenly, amid that savage desert, amid the wild beasts and fierce men, rose Columban's work, a holy city, governed by a new legislation.

The legislation was severe; he commanded difficult things, and he wished to be obeyed. "Obedience is the commencement and the end of the monk. The disciple of Christ who is truly obedient refuses nothing, hard or painful as may be the order given. He obeys with

ardor, with joy. And how far does his obedience go? Till death; for Christ obeyed his Father even unto death."*

"The monk lives under the discipline of his Father, and has but one Father; but he has companions, in order to learn of one humility, of another patience, of another silence, of another meekness. It is an exchange of lessons and examples, a mutual school, where all teach one another all virtues, that each may attain perfection."†

"The monk does not do what he will, but what he is bidden, takes what is given him, fulfils his tasks, submits to what he would not. He is broken before he gains his couch, he sleeps as he walks, he does not finish his sleep, he is awakened and he must rise. He is ill-treated and is silent. He fears his superior as a master, he loves him as a father; he believes that whatsoever is commanded him tends to his salvation, and he judges not the orders of those who are more than he; for his duty is to obey. Did not Moses say, Hear, O Israel, and be silent"?‡

The monk had nothing then as his own, not even his judgment and his will. He belonged totally to his monastery and his superior; he belonged to them even after death. "The monk," said the Irish synod,§ "under the abbot's orders, has no liberty during life; still less in death." His very body was the property of the monastery.

If the law was exacting, the penalty was no less rigorous.

Indefinite recitations of prayers and psalms,|| public

* St. Columban, Reg. Monast.

† Id.

‡ Id.

§ Capit. Select. (Spicel Dacher.)

|| St. Columban, Reg. Cœnob.

reprimands, acts of reparation in church, bread and water, sequestration, the discipline or the rod, redoubled fastings, chains, — such were the numerous energetic means in use at Luxeuil and elsewhere. The hardest are not the least employed. “For not responding Amen to grace at table with the rest, six blows;” for giving an excuse, even simply, and not saying at once, “It is my fault; I repent,” fifty blows; for opposing his own advice, however simply, to his superior’s, the monk was to receive fifty blows; for forgetting till office time to make the offering, a hundred blows; for leaving the enclosure of the monastery without permission, redoubled fasts and chains. Such a regime could suit only saints.

The material order was maintained as exactly as the spiritual and moral order. If, through forgetfulness, negligence, or any other cause,* any provisions, liquid or solid, were lost or spoiled, the guilty during twelve psalms, prostrate motionless in the church, without stirring a limb, says the rule, must humble himself and do penance. This was not a mere lesson of economy; it was especially a lesson of poverty: poverty is avaricious; it is lavish only in alms.

And we must aver it too, cloisters were not the seminaries of monks only; they were the schools of the people. There were practised humility, obedience, poverty, austerity; the spectacle of these virtues must have been strange for barbarians fresh from the forests of Germany, with all the passions of their former life, all the concupiscences of their new life, the passion of liberty and pride, the concupiscence of pleasure and riches. But the spectacle of monastic virtues, strange at first,

* St. Columban, Reg. Cenob.

after striking, instructed them ; it prepared them for ideas of order, moderation, government. The lessons and rigors of the rule, profitable directly for the sanctification of a few, profited indirectly society in its fullest extent.

This was the code of the cloister, the interior law ; these were the virtues of the monks. Neither this law nor these virtues satisfied the leaders. Bound to conduct these men, who had given themselves to them body and soul, they had all the cares of material administration and spiritual government. But the monasteries were little states, little societies, amid the nations and greater political societies ; they had to defend and maintain their existence, to protect their interests ; they met enemies, and needed allies ; they had to baffle cunning, and struggle with force ; an administration, an external policy, thus devolved on the heads of monasteries. The monastery, in fine, was not only a retreat to which men retired to labor in solitude to save their souls ; if it was a cloister, it was a church ; it was not enough that it exhaled an odor of virtue ; it was necessary that voice should issue from its walls to teach justice and charity. The monks were an army ; the monasteries were like fortified camps, where Christianity planted her legions, as Rome had done of old her veterans, to occupy more completely province after province. Every monastery acted in a circle, of which it was the centre, and labored to extend, consolidate, or maintain the influence of the gospel and the church ; for the church, in the first ages, carried on at once a war of conquest without, a work of civilization within ; it labored at the same time to convert barbarous paganism and to organize Christian barbarism. Now, on the abbots, too,

devolved the employment of the forces and the direction of movements.

Better than any other could Columban understand and tell what means and resources, what qualities and virtues, were needed, to carry such a task to an end ; and he says it in the firm, concise, decisive language that Patrick sometimes spoke, and that we meet also in the canons of the Irish synods.* "Let him," he says, speaking of that monastic leader whose difficult mission we have just depicted,—"let him be devoted in the state of humility, indulgent in the state of authority ; simple in faith, profound in morals ; tenacious for the interests of others, easy for his own ; candid in friendship, penetrating in snares ; harsh against effeminacy, tender against harshness ; changing in necessary matters, but invariable in the truth ; severe in prosperity, sweet in bitterness ; strong in tribulation, weak in disputes ; slow to anger, ready to be instructed ; slow to speak, quick to hear ; active in well doing, inert for punishment ; prudent in word, prompt in deed ; amiable to the good, harsh to the wicked ; clement to the weak, pitiless to the perverse ; high before him who humbles himself, audacious in the cause of truth." In this antithetic formula, if some terms seem of doubtful clearness or accuracy, we must say that the translation is literal, and that, withal, conciseness and antithesis may sometimes be dangerous. Such formulas, moreover, need comment or meditation. But it is enough to read them to discover there the science of a master of the spiritual life, the genius of a monastic legislator, and the character of the man who struggled unbendingly against Theuderic and Brunhilde.

* St. Columban, Sermon xiv.

St. Columban had planted himself in the Vosges ; he was there on the borders of the Frank and Burgundian territories, within reach of idolatrous Switzerland, near the princes of Austrasia. Anegray, Luxeuil, Fontaines, were rapidly built and peopled. There were strictly observed the rule of the rigid founder and the Irish traditions. There Easter was celebrated, according to St. Jerome ; there a strict cloister was observed ; not a laic, leud, prince, or king crossed the sacred barrier ; and out of sight of the profane, aloof from their contact, the companions of Columban might think themselves in Ireland. " We are in Ireland here," proudly wrote the saint to Pope Boniface ; " we borrow nought from the rules of these Gauls.* Tranquil in our desert, we trouble no man, and we abide by the rules of our masters." Yet it was difficult for this little island to establish itself in France, isolated even amid its deserts, like an isle in the midst of the ocean ; and Columban had no thoughts of being forgotten. He soon troubled the church in the Gauls ; above all, he troubled Theuderic and Brunehilde.

When not living in the license of polygamy, the Merovingians lived in the disorders of concubinage. Brunehilde, that second Jezebel, as Jonas calls her, fomented and encouraged the debaucheries of her grandson.† St. Columban raised his voice, repulsed the children born of adultery when presented for his benediction, and declared that never should that race sprung from evil spots ascend the throne. The children retired, but Brunehilde had her vengeance ; the neighborhood was forbidden all intercourse with the monastery ;

* Columban, Epist. i.

† Fredeg., Chronicon. Vita Columbae.

they were forbidden to let any one pass from it; Luxeuil was shut up in a circle where it must soon stifle. Yet Columban came forth; who would dare arrest his path? and when he drew nigh the royal abode, Theuderic's self paled. "Better," he exclaimed, "honor the man of God than provoke his wrath and that of the Lord." And as the saint would not shelter his head beneath the prince's roof, he had a table set without as if for himself. Columban cursed these presents. "The Most High," he cried with indignation, "rejects the gifts of the wicked." His malediction overthrew the prince's tables, the vessels flew into fragments, the wine and the viands were scattered on the ground. Theuderic's retainers fled in terror and dismay. Theuderic himself and Brunehilde came to humble their brows before him, ask pardon, and promise.

The promises were soon forgotten; and soon too came from Luxeuil letters *the words of which were like rods*. But this time, Brunehilde, too deeply wounded, would not yield; in her turn she sought new arms; and bishops, courtly bishops, as Jonas says, furnished her with them. The king came in person to Luxeuil to complain that the customs of the country were not followed, that the house was closed to Christian men, and to declare that Columban must, like others, open his monastery, or forego the royal protection. And at the same time he entered by violence, and was already in the refectory of the monks. "Thou hast come," said Columban, "to destroy the holy cloisters and sully regular discipline. Mark it — thy realm shall be ruined from top to bottom, and thou shalt perish, thou and all thy line." Theuderic recoiled. "Thou hopest," he at last replied to the saint, who pursued him with words of fire, — "thou hopest to win from

me the martyr's crown. I am not so mad ; I will not stain my soul with so great a crime. But know that he who has come here to defy all our customs may think of returning whence he came."

Yet it was only a temporary banishment. Baudulf was appointed to lead him to his place of exile ; it was southward in the mountains. But his guardians did not guard him ; they saw the power of God manifest in him, and they feared to share in the crime of his persecutors. One day Columban ascended the mountain top, waited to see whether any one would stop him in his way, and at noon he descended towards the Doubs, traversed the city with his companions, and reëntered his monastery.

This audacity seemed great ; Baudulf and Berther received orders to take the Irishman and lead him this time, not to Besançon, but to the sea shore, and put him in a vessel for Ireland. When they arrived, Columban was in the church amid his brethren, chanting, praying. To the orders communicated to him he replied simply, "I do not believe that God wishes me to return to the place of my birth, which I have once left for the love of Christ." It was necessary to employ force. Baudulf and Berther had not the courage ; they departed, leaving it to the hands of some of their most resolute men.

These, too, lost heart, when left alone and the moment of action came. They lamented over the orders which they were condemned to execute ; they asked the saint's pardon, and besought him to obey, as their lives were at stake. He repeated that he would yield only to violence. At last, say Jonas and Fredegarus, feeling equal danger, equal terror, on both sides, some touched the side of his robe, others fell at his feet ; and the saint, seeing the evils that his inflexibility might produce, left

his monastery. He left it full of tears, sobs, and cries of despair. All would have followed him, but he was permitted to take with him only those from Brittany and Ireland. "Remain here in peace," he said to the rest; "the Lord will soon avenge your sorrows."*

It was a sad journey, and full of bitterness. Near Avalon one of Theuderic's men would have slain him. At Nevers, Lua was brutally beaten. "God will punish thee," said Columban; "thee that smitest the blessed members of Christ." At Orleans they had no bread; two of the brethren went through the town, but came back empty-handed, so great was the fear of the king's wrath, when a woman, a foreigner like themselves, begged them to enter her house, and gave them all they needed. She was from a distant land, from Syria; her husband was blind, and for many years, she said, she led him from one country to another. Columban's prayer opened his eyes. As they passed through Tours, it is painful indeed for the exiles to pass there before St. Martin without being permitted to pray even a moment at his tomb. Theuderic had given orders that they should not enter a church. But God wished to give his servants that sweet consolation; in spite of boatmen, in spite of soldiers, the boat went straight to port, and stopped there. They had reached Nantes. Ragmund sought a vessel; Irish merchants were found homeward bound; they took Columban's baggage on board, and it was settled that he should embark at the mouth of the river. If God wished the saint to remain in France, it was the time for his interposition.

Columban suffered cruelly.

* Jonas, Vita Columban.

Under this firm will beat a tender heart, and had the trial been prolonged, though the will would have remained inflexible, the heart would have broken. His first feeling had been indignation and wrath; he gave utterance to them in terms that alarmed all who heard them. "That dog Theuderic drives me from amidst my brethren."* "Better," replied Chagnoald, "better drink milk than wormwood." This Chagnoald served Theuderic, and his wife was a kinswoman of King Theudebert; he wished to retain the friendship of both. "As thou art a friend of Theuderic's," replied the saint, "thou canst go on my behalf to announce him these things that will fill his heart with joy. It is, that before three years, he and his sons shall be extirpated from the earth." At the same time he foretold to Ragnmund that King Clothar, whom they now despised, would before three years be their master. But as they drew nigh their journey's end, his inmost soul was troubled, and from Nantes he addressed his brethren a letter full of grief repressed and welling tears kept back. "I have wished," he said, "to visit the nations, and bear the gospel to them; but in return they have given me gall in my thirst, and my soul is almost annihilated. . . . Fain I would write to thee, [he is speaking to Attala,] in which I would put all my tears; but as I know thy heart, I have adopted another language; I have spoken only of necessary things; they, too, are sad enough; I would not provoke tears; I would keep them back; and lo! even now my tears escape. Yet it is better to repress them to their source: the soldier weeps not in war."†

He wrote, too, when they came to tell him that the

* Jonas, *Vita Columbani*.

† St. Columban, *Epis.* vol. iii.

vessel was ready. "Pray for me," he exclaims to his brethren, "pray for me."* . . . To regain Luxeuil, he would have crossed the abysses; he recalled to mind the Hebrew prophet whose name he bore. "If they cast me into the sea, pray that I too may be borne through the waters, and restored to your beloved land." At the same time, he gave them his last instructions. "If my absence is prolonged more than it was before, if Attala is not capable of governing you, you know that you have brethren in these parts, in the neighborhood of the Bretons. [His disciple, Potemten, had founded a monastery in the neighborhood of Coutances.] Assemble in the spot that seems the best, and let him direct you whom all shall choose. If the spot please you, and God's hand build there with you, may you there increase and multiply by thousands and by thousands of thousands!"

Yet even in that hour he did not despair; on the contrary, his hopes revived. It was never without a secret trouble, without a religious terror, that men touched the anointed of Christ, those who seemed to bear in their persons the glorious mark of a divine consecration. As long as their course lay through their own monarch's dominions, as long as they were in France, under the eye of the leuds and counts, Theuderic's servants had done their duty; they had even done it brutally at times, as it was in their nature to do. But when they reached Nantes, near the Bretons, in face of the sea, at the extremity of the world, they looked around them; no longer (so to speak) did any one see them; they gave length to the chain;† they lagged

* St. Columban, Ep. iiii.

† Id., ad finem.

behind, gradually getting to a distance from their prisoners, as if in hopes that they would escape. God, on the other hand, manifested his will; thrice did the vessel chosen to bear off Columban essay to leave; thrice did the sea roll it back to the shore. Count Theudoald shrunk from obstinately opposing God's will. Columban soon perceived that he was free.

Not only was he free, but all were at his feet; * to the dignity and authority of sanctity was now added the glory of having been a confessor of Christ. Luxeuil and the states of Theuderic were barred against him, but the rest of France lay open. He first proceeded to the court of Clothar, king of the Northern Austrasians. Clothar had learned of his sufferings; he had sympathized with him, and was now overjoyed to welcome the confessor to his dominions. An alliance already existed between them; this alliance was sealed; it was advantageous to both. Columban was honored, protected, recommended; in return, he labored for the prince's salvation; for it is rare, as Jonas admits with a quaint indulgence, not to find something to reprove in the court of kings. Moreover, he directed his political movements. Theuderic and Theudebert made war on each other, each claiming various provinces, and each called Clothar to his aid. "Let them tear each other," said Columban; "in less than three years the kingdom shall be thine." His prediction was accomplished. Columban sat in the deep forest, on the trunk of a fallen oak, reading the Scriptures, when the two kings met at Tolbiac; he beheld the battle in spirit, and as Chagnoald asked him to pray that Theudebert might over-

* Jonas, *Vita Columbani*.

come Theuderic, "It is thus that Christ in his commandment bids us pray for our enemies. As to the two kings, the equitable Judge at this instant pronounces their sentence." Theuderic had persecuted him, Theudebert had not defended him; both were severely punished. The saint showed gratitude and vengeance in the Irish way.

And yet it was not Theuderic and Brunehilde, nor the scenes of Luxeuil, nor the shame and outrages of being dragged a captive across all France, nor the heart-breaking preparations for the journey, and the last farewell; it was not the brutal wrath of the princes, that had most deeply wounded his heart;* but rather the treason, the hostility, the indifference, or the cowardice of the bishops. Court bishops had delivered him up; not one among all who then held the sees of France rose to protest against this iniquitous violence. The Bishop of Langres tore from him Eustace, one of his most loved disciples; Sophronius of Nantes seemed to have shown as much zeal as Count Theudoald did in fulfilling the king's orders. Leupar of Tours admitted him to his table, and supplied him with necessaries for the journey—tepid charity, timid zeal! Well do we discern the Merovingian bishops, whose sad and often scandalous history we find in the pages of Gregory of Tours. It was already that church of the seventh century, of which Fleury admits "that it was greatly relaxed; that for eighty years, there were scarcely any councils, and that the archbishops feebly maintained discipline." What would the Irish church have said? What would men have said in Ireland, where the epis-

* Fredegond, Chron. Jonas, Vita Columbani.

copacy was so strong, the monastic habit so inviolable, and sanctity so sacred?

This universal silence, this universal abandonment, had nevertheless other causes than the weakness and unworthiness of bishops. Columban came from Ireland, from the Irish schools, bringing their rules and traditions, in which he intended neither to suppress nor to change aught. He seemed to bear Ireland with him, and wherever he stopped, wherever he traced an enclosure, or consecrated a church, he pretended that that enclosure should become an Ireland, that church an Irish church. In this proud pretension there was something touching too, withal. But it was not easy to admit it, or prevent its offending the foreign churches, which, offering hospitality to him, wished him to consider himself at home among them, and conform to their custom. Their susceptibility might be natural and legitimate. But setting aside the question of self-love, there remained a graver question — that of unity.

There must be unity in one country, and one church; it was not probable nor good that France should permit herself to be treated like a wild land, where the first occupant could settle as a master; where foreign nationalities and foreign discipline might freely found here and there their independent colonies. The order and nationality of the church would have disappeared in these anarchical or bizarre republics. Now Irish discipline was separated from French discipline by considerable essential differences. To save unity at least, France had to become Irish, if Ireland would not become French.

The division was manifested especially in three principal points — the cloister of the monks, the tonsure, and

the time of celebrating Easter. On the first question, Columban had to struggle simply with the Gauls. His cloister was, they said, too severe, strange even, and shameful for the church that dared to rear it. It should have imitated in silence. The second question must have been grave, if we consider the discussions wherewith it filled Ireland, England, and, through them, all Christendom. According to the Saxon Ceolfred, the question was to choose between the custom of Job, Joseph, and St. Peter,* and the usage of Simon the magician. In these terms the solution is not doubtful. It seems, moreover, though facts are not over clear, and texts contradictory, that Patrick, and after him the synods,† must have proscribed the tonsure from ear to ear, and that in Ireland itself they were the dissidents who did not wear it as a crown. In fine, we do not see in Columban's life that he provoked or maintained the least discussion on this point. For the honor of the Gallo-Frankish church, we must then set aside the first point; the second has left no traces here; on the third, the struggle was a grave one for the whole church, for Columban laborious and painful.

Without pretending to appreciate all the importance of the debate, we may premise that it becomes a religion to fix in a precise manner the date of its great feasts, and to wish the same date observed throughout its empire. These feasts are solemn manifestations of a belief; it is proper that there should be a completeness in the manifestation, as there is unity in belief. Now, Rome had decided, or rather Latin tradition had naturally prevailed over Greek, and since the days of St.

* Epist. ad Naitan, in Beda.

† Usher, Catalog. SS. Hib. Capit. Select. Spicilegium Dacherii.

Polycarp, and especially the council of Nice, the Holy See had authorized and tolerated no dissidence. Columban had to meet, then, not merely the bishops of the Gauls, he had to convince and bring back Rome itself. A difficult task, and yet at first he attempted it. He conferred in Gaul with Candid, a Roman priest; then, in a letter addressed to Gregory the Great, he urged him to establish unity by receiving the Irish computation.* To Victorius and the Gallicans, who have dug up and obscured the Easter, he opposes the tradition derived from the East, and the science of the Irish masters; he relies on Anatolius, St. Jerome, Eusebius of Cæsarea. His argument is remarkably free, and singularly lively. "How canst thou," he cries, "thou, whose genius and intellect fills the world, celebrate this obscure Pasch? How is it that thou hast not long since swept away this error, with which the Gauls have embarrassed the church? Dost thou fear to be accused of innovation? to reverse what Leo has done? A living saint may correct what another, and even greater, saint had not corrected before him. Have regard to the weak; show not the scandal of diversity. For my part, I avow plainly that whoever goes against the authority of St. Jerome will be rejected as a heretic by the western churches." We might say that he menaces, or at least excites fears of a schism. This letter, we are told, by some unknown accident never reached St. Gregory.

But Columban soon felt that he was not able to carry Rome and the church with him. In the letters which he subsequently addressed to the pope, to synods, to bish-

* St. Columban, Ep. V.

ops, he still argues, but in defence, in excuse ; he seems to have given up all idea of convincing. It is no longer argument that prevails, but prayer. He no longer wishes to reform foreign churches ; he intrenches himself in his monastery ; he declares that there he is in Ireland, and asks to be permitted to follow the custom of his country, the rule of his fathers and masters. His request was humble and touching.* "I am not," he says, "the author of this diversity, and as I have come into this country for Christ, our common Lord and Saviour, I pray and conjure you in his name to permit us to live in peace and charity with you, in the depths of these forests, and to end our lives in silence by the bones of our seventeen brethren who have died here,—end them as we have led them these last twelve years,—that we may continue to pray for you as we should, and as we have hitherto done. Let us abide together in Gaul as we shall abide together in heaven. See," he added, "what you have to do for poor strangers, grown old in God's service ; it seems to me that it will be better for you to comfort than to molest us." His request was rejected. He carried it before Pope Boniface ; † and soon after the wrath of Theuderic and Brunhilde was enkindled against him.

The part of the French clergy, their attitude in perils to which Columban was exposed and the trials to which he was subjected, can surely not be justified ; they are perhaps explained.

We may explain, too, how Columban, when he was free, did not remain in France. We may explain how, when Theuderic had perished wretchedly, when Brune-

* Columban, Ep. ii.

† Id. Ep. i.

hilde had come to her cruel and shameful end, when their children had disappeared from the earth, when Columban was free to see once more his beloved houses of Anagrate, Luxeuil, and Fontaines, he still would not return to France. Clothar, master of all the Frankish kingdoms, at the pinnacle of that power and fortune which Columban had predicted and prepared,* sent Eustace in search of his master, urging him to follow up every trace, and find him wherever he might be. Eustace found him in Italy, in his monastery of Bobbio; and he delivered the prince's message, begging the saint to return and console his brethren in Burgundy. But Columban refused; he remained in his Italian monastery, recommending Luxeuil to King Clothar. He had adopted France; he had loved it; he had labored for its salvation. In return, as he said at Nantes, it had sated him with gall; when he left it, he resolved to see it no more, and eternal was the farewell that his too painfully wounded soul addressed it.

He went his way with St. Gall and some others; he entered the Alps, evangelized their still pagan mountaineers, laid in their midst the germ of monastic science and sanctity, in the great monastery which bore his disciple's name; then, as he marched towards the Sclavonian tribes, he was turned aside by the Lord, and bending his way southward, descended to Lombardy. It was, moreover, at that moment that the victory of Tolbiac gave for a moment to the hands of Theuderic the states of Theudebert, and Columban was forced to depart.

The Lombard King Agilulf received him with great

* Jonas, Vita Columbani.

joy. Between Trebbia and Bobbio, at the foot of the mountains, were a forsaken village and a church once dedicated to St. Peter. There Columban halted, there he built a monastery; and thence he soon took, in all that passed in the church of those parts, an active and important part. For if France had broken his heart, it had not broken the vigor of his firm and active mind. The Arians troubled the Lombard country, and disturbed the faith of the people; Columban met them, and wrote a book against them.* Nestorian quarrels were revived; there was a schism on the matter of the three chapters; Pope Boniface was suspected, and even accused, of heresy, and Columban undertook to write to him. We cannot be expected to enter into this history. It concerns us only to mark the high rank which the Irish saint assumed on his arrival, and the imposing figure which he forms amid the ultramontane churches, and in the very face of Rome. Moreover, he lived there only a few years. Bobbio, which had gathered up and revived in the repose of its hospitable solitude his wandering life and ulcerated soul, guarded his ashes, and honored them too most piously—a precious legacy, of which France deserved to be deprived. The monastery grew and prospered under the immortal benediction of its founder. In the last century it still existed. One would wish to know that it ever lives.

To that France which had shown such harshness, he left pledges however; he left it disciples, living works of his science and zeal.† Eustace of Luxeuil, Agil, Babolen, Faro of Melun, Audemer of Boulogne, Filbert of Jumièges, Chagnoald of Laon, Achar of Tournay,

* *Liber contra Arianos.*

† *Jonas, Vita Columbani. Ordericus.*

Ragnacaire of Bâle, came forth from his school. Ado and St. Ouen had been blessed by him ; many other bishops or abbots owed their virtue and learning to his lessons and example. By his rule, his foundations, his disciples, he exercised, therefore, a wide-spread and salutary influence ; he took a considerable part, and a decisive one, in the monastic movement of the seventh century ; and the whole church profited by that severe discipline for which the master had to suffer so bitter a persecution.

Such was St. Columban ; such was his life ; these were the labors and fruits of his mission. Jonas has related but the history of a man ; but in that history of an individual we may see or catch glimpses of several. Many were the masters whom Ireland sent to propagate in the countries of the continent, if not the disputable traditions of her church, at least the sanctity of her discipline and the ardor of her spirit. Among them Columban was but the greatest and most sorely tried.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE IRISH MISSIONARIES.

WHEN the Christian religion, by the voice of St. Patrick, called Ireland, Ireland, as though she felt that her time had come, and the work awaited her, awoke abruptly, and ardently embraced the toil. In an instant she became Christian; she seems to have been so beforehand, to have borne the faith within her, needing but a ray of light to reveal what was already in her soul. Patrick had only to open the gospel before her eyes, she understood it; he had only to stretch out his hand towards foreign lands, and the missionary instinct was energetically manifested in her. Not for herself alone, we have said already, not for herself alone was Ireland to be converted, but especially for others. Hence she sent forth pilgrims, whose faith and zeal revived faith and zeal wherever they passed; studious travellers, whose example exhorted to holy studies; learned masters, whose erudition contributed to maintain or revive pale or expiring lights; reformers, who purified the morals of the church and withstood the spread of barbarous manners. Nor was this all. What was asked of Ireland was, apostles to evangelize pagan nations.

On two occasions Patrick convoked his people in solemn assemblies. There grave questions were debated, the general interests of the church regulated;

we might call them the comitia of Christian Ireland, a sort of popular council. There, especially, Patrick loved to open his heart to his people, and communicated his thoughts to them. What words did he utter there? We know not; but Ireland was agitated as though he had preached a crusade, and the whole assembly had cried out, GOD WILLS IT! Adventurous spirits, ardent characters, firm hearts, tried sanctity, all the strong men and stronger women rallied. associated, groups united, assemblies were formed, armies concentrated on different parts of the coast; they seemed preparing to set out to conquer or colonize a world. After the second assembly, says the Chronicle of St. Peter's of Ratisbonne, thirty thousand men of tried sanctity and justice left their country together. With the permission and blessing of St. Patrick, they left their fatherland, acquaintances, friends, kindred, property, their castles, cities, all that they possessed; and inflamed with the divine love, they followed Christ, clad in goat skins, in a voluntary poverty. Safely did this multitude of saints pass through the dangers of the sea; and then they divided into three troops, which proceeded to the three parts of the world, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Such is the later account of the Germanic legend; and it shows how powerfully foreign nations had been struck by the expansive and inexhaustible fecundity that poured unceasingly among them countless colonies of missionaries.

If, with Colgan, we consider the group of missions sent forth from Ireland between the fifth and eleventh centuries, we find twelve especially, counting as the first that which Patrick led in person to Ireland, and which

won to the gospel the Isle of Saints. The heads of these missions were Rioch, Rupert, Finnian, Columbkil, Barry, Mardoc, Colman, Columban, Eloch, Switbert, or rather Willbrord, Forannan. Each of these twelve led forth with him twelve companions — a sacred number, a blessed number, which Ireland, in pious imitation, had borrowed from Christ and his apostles. Nor is the list complete; to it we must add at least those who bore the gospel to Ireland and the apostles of Northern Germany. To the organized and regular missions we must add, especially, the unknown array of isolated pioneers, independent voyagers, free missionaries, who went on every side among Christians or among idolaters, and all who rallied to devote themselves obscurely to the work undertaken by the masters. Here and there their traces, sometimes even their names, are accidentally found in the Acts. Who would, who could count them?

All neophytes are apostles; the soul cannot be strongly influenced by a new truth, without seeking to diffuse it; and surely that is the most ardent of zeals which religion enkindles in man's heart. It was natural, then, that the mission spirit, deadened in the older Christians, should ferment in the bosom of Ireland's young Christianity. But all men, all nations, are not equally predestined and predisposed to a work ever so arduous in itself. A strong faith, a lively charity, and the firmest hope mayhap suffice not; these are but the religious qualities, the divine parts, so to speak, of the apostle; something else is needed. In the mission spirit there is not merely the sentiment of charity, but often, too, the instinct of adventure: if faith makes missionaries, imagination does likewise; and to produce a useful propaganda, certain human qualities of mind and

character may be the indispensable auxiliaries of the three great Christian virtues. These various conditions were all found in the men of Ireland, and they must have been wonderful missionaries. New in the faith, that is, ardent and enthusiastic, they undertook the conversion of the whole world, degenerate Christians as well as Gentiles; adventurous and romantic, they set out for almost inaccessible and still unexplored countries; they visited realms whose history and wonders were known but vaguely and by hearsay. On arriving among the peoples whom they were to initiate or reform, they displayed unfettered that impetuous and impassioned activity, or that sweet and winning grace, that rigid and inflexible force, or that indulgent and sympathetic tenderness, which so variously characterize the saints of the Irish legend. They found, in fine, in their lively intelligence, and the natural qualities of their ready oratorical and poetic gifts, invaluable resources, and powerful means to captivate or sway barbarous minds.

The work of the Irish apostolate was then active, prolonged, sustained, and profitable.

They entered every country that they could reach, and every where their toil was efficacious and fruitful; every where they founded or revived faith and churches, discipline and monasteries, science and schools. Thus among the Britons of Wales, Cornwall, and Armorica; thus among the Anglo-Saxons, Picts, and Icelanders; thus even in France; thus among the Germanic and Sclavic nations of Central Europe. Moreover, they did not proceed by order, as may well be supposed, catechising first one country, then another, or beginning by the south or north to redescend or remount towards

the north or south ; or circumscribing around them a circle narrow at first, and progressively expanding. From the first day, they went around in every direction, turning towards every horizon, stopping where each was called or detained by his particular vocation, borne away wherever the chance of the route or the curiosity of zeal swept them on. Adventurous bands took their route towards Rome and Jerusalem, and Fridolin visited the banks of the Rhine at the same time that Fingar, with seven hundred and seventy companions and seven bishops; landed in Cornwall, and that Albeus's twenty-two disciples disembarked on the shores of Iceland.

It was a strange country, that hyperborean Iceland,* lost in the Saturnian Sea, now wrapped in mists, now locked in frozen waves, smoking and flaming like an immense pyre, half extinguished beneath the waters and the snows, visible during six months, and vanished during six more ; for from the days of Pytheas all this was known to the ancients. Nor were its people less strange ; it seems, moreover, that all the nations of that latitude had peculiar manners ; that there was a boreal society and civilization ; and that the climate, as Montesquieu will have it, there produced a civil and political constitution, which was developed and completed as you approached the pole. At the *Æbudes*, says Solinus,† men know not the fruits of the earth ; they live on fish and milk ; they have but one king, as their isles are separated only by narrow channels, and this king has nothing of his own ; all that he possesses is public property ; well-ordered laws retain him in rectitude.

* Pliny, *Maj.*

† Solinus, 25.

They feared lest cupidity should divert him from the path of justice; on the contrary, poverty inspires him only with equity. The insular democracy was as foreseeing as suspicious. He has no wife, adds the same author, and the hope, nay, the very desire and idea of creating an heir and founding a dynasty, is thus suppressed. In return, it was agreed that while none belonged to him as his own, each might provisionally be his.

At Thule,* the same system prevailed, practised in a more general and complete manner. There all were kings; that is to say, the community which in the *Æbudes* was the custom for the chief, was the universal law of the nation; there was no marriage. Their religion was cruel; they shed human blood in their festivals. Mild and sociable otherwise, they maintained with strangers a commerce of barter, and the Britons — more especially, too, the Scots — carried on diligently trade and fishery in those parts.† Ernulf, in the fifth century, bore the gospel thither; but this first germ seems not to have taken root on the Icelandic soil; for Brio, in the ninth century, found the temples still standing, and the rites of the ancient superstition prevailing. He it was who founded or prepared the theocratic Christian society which replaced the communism of the Platonist savages of Thule. Then there flourished under the rigorous polar skies a happy state, where man, respecting his duties, made his rights respected — a free and Christian state: “The Icelanders speak rarely, and always tell the truth; they make no use of oaths, because they know no falsehood. Their king is their priest; their bishop is at the same time

* Solinus, 25.

† Pliny, *Maj.* IV. 30.

their prince." Thus wrote even Giraldus. The work begun by Ireland in the time of Helgo Biola lasted more than four centuries ; it perished only in the thirteenth, under the despotism of Hako, King of Norway. In that interval, Iceland had in her turn diffused the gospel ; she had borne it to the soil of Greenland, to the shores and in the straits of North America. These churches perished, lost and forgotten, like icebound ships, and long after have their fragments been found.

The Æbudes also had been sanctified ; Columbkil planted the cross there, and founded at Iona, one of the isles of that remote archipelago, the most powerful establishment that Christian Ireland ever possessed. The Orcades had their apostle, and if we are to believe the traditions collected by John of Tynemouth, and another legendary, they must have been singularly favored. "Servanus," they tell us, "was the first bishop of these islands ; he came from afar, for he was the son of an Arabian king ; he had been already bishop of the Chanaanites ; then came to evangelize the Orkneys ; and when he appeared in Italy, his sanctity and glory were so great, that the church of Rome made him pope."* And even these wonderful adventures are the least in his career.

At Iona, Columbkil confronted the Albanian Scots and Picts. In the fifth century, the Breton Bishop Ninian had penetrated among the Southern Picts ; but there the work of the Britons stopped. Columbkil resumed it, (565.) He went among these fierce men, met and overthrew their magicians, and accomplishing prodigies, averting scourges, lavishing temporal benefits with the

* Usher, Brit. Eccles. Antiq. p. 674.

holy word, he soon reared up a new church. After him, his disciples, alternately leaving Iona, penetrated to the depths of the valleys, plunged into every mountain gorge, traversed lake and heather ; churches multiplied, and in the remotest parts of their wild land the Picts and Scots saw monasteries rising, of which Iona was, and long continued to be, the metropolitan.

Ere long, Aidan saw open before him, (630,) thanks to King Oswald, the pagan realm of Northumbria. About the same time, (637,) Fursey was welcomed by the king of the East Saxons. Lindisfarne and Cnobbsburg rose simultaneously. England was assailed at once from the north-west and south-east. Soon after, in 676, Maidulf founded, under the protection of King Ethelstan, the celebrated school of Malmesbury. Aidan and Finan were truly the apostles of Northern England ; they begot to the faith the kings and nations, and held them over the font of baptism ; there, too, they arrived first, and labored alone. Not so in the south ; at the same time that the Irish struck south from Iona, missionaries sent from Rome entered England, and settled in Kent, to the south of the Thames. Cnobbsburg was on the other bank : the Roman and the Scot met again.

Unfortunately, there was no alliance ; the struggle which Columban had maintained in France was renewed in England. There were in England, even, three churches face to face — Rome, Wales, Ireland. The Romans took a decided stand, and assumed to be judges ; it was necessary for the Britons to bend to the see of Canterbury, and unite with the Romans in converting the Anglo-Saxons : they refused. It was necessary for the Irish to follow the Roman custom as to the celebra-

tion of Easter : they preferred to retire. The Romans remained alone. History tells how they punished the British clergy.

When the Irish left England, and abandoned Lindisfarne, England did not withal forget them. The Romans were unequal to the task devolved upon them ; the exiled masters were sought beyond the sea ; and Anglo-Saxons filled the schools of Iona, Armagh, Ross-Ailithry, Lismhor, Cluain-Aird. Ireland did not fully evangelize pagan England ; but Christian England sought, and still received, the lessons of Irish science. The alliance was not broken between the two nations ; and they found themselves united beforehand when the great enterprise was concerned in which they joined hands, and in which they needed indeed to marshal all their strength.

Thus far Ireland seems only to prelude and prepare herself for the great apostolic work, the conversion of Germany. Commencing by the north, as though loath to leave a foe in the rear, she had evangelized Iceland, the secondary archipelagoes of the Hebrides and Orkneys, then Scotland. Thence she had entered England, and there had prepared, in the disciples formed by her, valiant and powerful allies, who were even in time to become her chiefs. At the same time, she reconnoitred the German frontier, planted herself on the Rhine and in the Alps ; it was the work of Fridolin, Maccallen, Columban, Gall, and Magnoald. Then it was time to strike to the very heart of Germany.

There wandered or roamed, still threatening and foaming like wild beasts invested in their dens, or arrested by barriers, the tribes that came too far or too late to pass the Rhine and Danube with the great

invading armies, and seize a place in the provinces of the empire — on the north, the Saxons, and nations of their race; on the south, the Avars, and hordes of a kindred blood. One moment, at least, there was a dread of a second deluge overwhelming the west, and of her now Christianized and half civilized nations disappearing beneath the heathendom and barbarism of a new invasion. The irruption was checked and repelled; this was the task, this the glory of the first Carolingians. But as long as these tribes remained pagan and savage, the danger subsisted; they could renew their assaults; and they would not always meet a Karl, a Pepin, or a Charlemagne, in arms on the Christian frontier. They must needs be converted; and the Carolingians, Charlemagne especially, sensible of this absolute necessity, labored energetically and with feverish activity to effect the end. Hence the hasty, multiplied missions, protected by the buckler, seconded by the sword; hence the imperious summons of the Cæsar mingling with the exhortations of the bishops; those expeditions in concert with missions, those bloody chastisements, supplying the inefficacy of canonical penances against the apostate or obstinate. Charlemagne was the last of his race; he must perforce leave his work complete; the world's salvation depended on it.

Ireland aided him powerfully. Taking with her the Anglo-Saxons whom she had prepared for the apostolate, she descended on the shore of Friseland, and meeting on the Rhine the reënforcements sent by France, she formed that ecclesiastical army that marched with the troops of Charlemagne, not unfrequently penetrating farther. She facilitated, completed, consolidated the triumphs of the Frank warriors, the salvation of Christendom, and western society.

Disibod had in the sixth century * opened the road to Germany. Flying from the troubles of the Irish church, he took refuge on a mountain that overhung the course of the Glann. Some disciples bore him company ; and then for the first time did Germany hear the mystic sound of the Irish bell. It announced the speedy arrival of the apostles.

Rupert, before all others, entered the valley of the Danube.† There especially had Christianity suffered and lost ground. It had, so to say, been trodden down beneath the feet of Attila, and the barbarians who had after him marched through those provinces to reach Italy. He fixed his residence at Salzburg, and when he died, Bavaria, Bohemia, Noricum, Styria, with other provinces, had already heard the gospel, and the churches were rising again. His labors were continued by Virgil. Soon after, Kilian‡ preached in Franconia, and, with his companions, shed his blood in the country of Wirtzburg. Further north, on the banks of the Escaut, Livinus too sacrificed his life for the salvation of the Friselanders. This was the first period of the long and bloody struggle of western Christianity against the paganism of the eastern nations, a period wholly Irish, and wholly apostolical ; for we do not find one of these apostles calling to his aid the power or the arms of the Frankish princes.

Then Willibrord's mission was organized. Egbert, Archbishop of York, chose twelve monks, whom he committed to the guidance of Willibrord ; they were

* Vita Disibod, in Surius.

† Vita Ruperti, in Colgan. (But see Hansorius, *Germania Sacra*, p. 36.)

‡ Vita Kilian. Ant. Lect. (Can.)

Swithberth, Wigberth, Herenfrid, and others, whose names are unknown. All these names are Anglo-Saxons, and the mission set out from England. Yet it was Irish too; for Willibrord,* Wigberth, like Egberth himself, were pupils of Ireland. They bent their way to Friseland, advancing thence into Denmark; the first efforts were not happy; but the Franks soon conquered the Friselanders. Willibrord fixed his residence at Treves, and the labors of the mission began again with better success.

Winfred (this was Boniface's Saxon name) then came with a new legion — Burchard, Lull, Willibald, and Wunibald, Witta, Gregory. These were not from the schools of Ireland. Many others doubtless set out with Winfred, and among these were natives of Ireland; others too, perhaps from Ireland, subsequently joined him in Germany; but England already seemed to separate; she did her work apart, and if she still associated with Ireland, it was to lord over her. Boniface fixed his abode at Mentz. This was showing already that the work had advanced. With what ardor and with what ability he labored there in his turn; how by him and after him was accomplished that conversion of the Saxons, pressed at once by the Frank warriors and the English missionaries, is well known. The English, moreover, soon tired of the work. It seems that even then, before the Norman blood was mingled in their veins, evangelical works, heroic sacrifices of charity, accorded ill with their temper. Since the days of Boniface, they have formed many establishments, effected many conquests; they have organized many missions

* Bede, Hist. Eccl. Alcuin, Vita Willibrord.

even : but true missionaries are not organized ; the English have never conquered for the gospel ; their establishments have not been made to gain souls.

While the English halted on the banks of the Rhine, the Irish pressed forward.* Patto, from his Saxon bishopric, descended to the shores of the Baltic ; Albuin won by his labors the title of Apostle of the Thuringians. Two centuries had now elapsed, and they heroically pursued the unaccomplished work among these hard and rebellious people : in the ninth century, Tanco, Isenger, Ernulf, were the victims of the wrath of the pagans ; in the eleventh, and in the same countries, John found the crown of martyrdom. We call these because their names are inserted in the Martyrology, because they have left bloody traces on the soil ; and yet many others labored with them, like them giving their strength, their very life. Adam of Bremen, and all the ecclesiastical writers of Germany, have related their history, or at least handed down their memory. The first pages in the archives of the sees and monasteries of Germany are full of Irish names ; for the churches born in the blood of the first apostles were long instructed and edified by their successors.

Such was the work of the Irish missionaries. By them the light of the gospel illumined the nations lost in the north of the European ocean, and was reflected on the icebergs of the poles ; by them the Picts, the Scots, the Anglo-Saxons, were initiated in Christian doctrine and learning ; by them, in fine, the fierce and savage tribes of the continent, both in the centre and north, were preached to, baptized, gathered in churches,

* Acta SS. Hibernia.

attached more strongly to their soil, and prepared for civilization. They ceased to threaten or alarm the already organized Catholic nations of the west ; and then, too, a Christian empire was permitted to rise among them. We may in justice say that the Irish apostles were, to a great extent, the real founders of the German empire, and the peaceful precursors of the house of Babenberg. To one who would appreciate the immense service which they rendered to Christendom and Christianity, it is enough to reflect on what Europe was doing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and to ask what she could have done, if the church had not first labored for three centuries to gather in the faith all these barbarous tribes, in whom eight centuries of time, diplomacy and war, of convulsions and revolutions, have not since then blended or severed nationalities, fused or separated language, organized a constitution, regulated confusion, and fixed the political condition.

In this long and manifold history of Irish missions there would be more than one touching episode, more than one dramatic scene to gather up, more than one interesting life to relate. Rupert,* his endless journeys, his fruitful preaching, his foundations, his happy and ever unwearied old age, mildly closing in the apostolic labor ; Erentrude, his sister or niece, his inseparable companion, come with him from his own land, following him every where, on the Danube, in the Alps, and at Rome, praying him not to die before her, begging him with tears at least not to leave her long after him in this world ; Theodo, the good Duke of Bavaria, so easily converted, so zealous for the faith, so tenderly devoted to its apos-

* Vita Ruperti, in Surius, and in Colgan.

tle, and commending him in his last moments to his heir with pious and earnest impressiveness ; these serene figures, these well-spent lives, form paintings in the legend, whose soft coloring, sober charm, and evangelic character, we would fain reproduce. If Rupert and Erentrude are disputed with Ireland, we might easily put in their stead saints whose nationality is less doubtful.

Moreover, there was not merely a torpid and ruin-covered Christianity to awaken, among these hardy men of the Rhine, Weser, and Elbe ; hardier toil and bloodier scenes were to be confronted. We see Kilian* and his companions prepare long in their Irish monastery for their difficult mission ; then passing through Rome, fortified by the blessing of the successor of the apostles, enter Franconia, and there publish, in words of eloquence, the new doctrine ; Gosbert converted, and soon amazed that more rigorous obligations were revealed to him, and gradually imposed upon him ; then a woman, Geilana, threatened in her ambition and her love, arm her power and wiles against the saints ; the saints, with a presentiment of their death, prepare calmly for it in prayer. One night they disappeared. "They have apparently departed," says Geilana ; and the wretched duke forgot them, relapsed unto his guilty love and his idolatry. Meanwhile, the bodies of the martyrs were concealed under an unclean soil ; a pious woman had alone witnessed the massacre of the victims, and honored their memory. The forgetfulness and the profanation ceased only when the day of revelation and chastisement came for Geilana and her companions.

* *Egilw. Vita Kiliani.*

We should fear, on taking up one of these narratives, to add pages to pages already too numerous. They belong, moreover, to history ; and by the authors who relate them, as well as by the spots where they occurred, they are German. No one of these apostles, in fine, stands in sufficient relief in the Irish legend to call for a distinct place. They form a glorious group, and it would be of little use to divide this collective glory, to detach a name, in order to exalt it above the others, and invest it with a glory all its own.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE IRISH LEGEND ABROAD.

HISTORY and the legend may sometimes be allied ; they may be contemporaneous and live in the same country, take up and be inspired by the same facts and the same personages ; while one discovers and exposes, the other transforms or imagines. But it is not always so ; and most frequently it is in the silence of history that the legend is heard ; she is silent when history speaks. If the truthful statements of history make us at times regret the doubtful stories of the legend, it happens, too, that real scenes and human figures possess so dramatic a pathos, so grave an interest, that we should perhaps regret to see the imagination touch the noble outlines. Sanctity and heroism, when haloed by the marvellous, rise in our regard, but at the same time recede ; our surprise redoubles, but our belief diminishes ; in most cases at least our faith hesitates. Now to esteem, to admire, to love, we must believe in the reality of what we love. In the satisfaction which our soul experiences on reading the account of great actions and great virtues, there is more than superficial emotion of sympathy or admiration ; there is the heartfelt satisfaction, the secret consolation given by the spectacle of the moral power and beauty attainable by that humanity, to which we ourselves belong, and which, on the other hand, our vileness rivals so poorly. If history then has

saints and heroes, whose grandeur the legend has not exalted, whose perfection it has not idealized, so much the better ; the more incredulous will be able to credit it, and consequently admire them, perhaps even think of imitating at a distance their more easy virtues.

Let us not seek, then, in the lives of the Irish apostles and martyrs, other poetry than that of their evangelical toil, and the bloody sacrifice of self-devoting charity. Their life and death happily belong to history ; their acts and their passions are but the true and simple, albeit touching and dramatic, prologue of German history. But are there no other saints whom the Irish imagination has followed in their wanderings ? Among those who went to live and die afar, are there none who were curiously accompanied on their course, whose adventures have been collected and adorned ? It would seem natural for the Irish legend, in this movement which carried away the whole church, and amid this nomade people, to emigrate also, and journey in order to relate on its return what had been seen and done by those who returned not ; and it would be interesting to follow this poetic traveller.

Yet it was not so. The Irish legend does not leave Ireland. Ireland forgot those whose face she no longer beheld, or whose ashes she possessed not. She left at least to the foreign land the care of their memory, and the lives of the saints who died on the continent was written by the nations whose native land they had adopted. Their legend, then, does not properly belong to Ireland. The saints are Irish, their legends German, Breton, or French.

The saint, in fact, is not the author of his legend, but the hero. He exists in it, doubtless, and by his spirit,

his works, his life, his character, gives the first matter ; the church and the people complete it, infusing their love, their imagination, their faith ; infusing, too, their ideas, their customs, and their national genius. Nations do nothing that has not a national stamp ; if what is national is popular, so, too, what is popular is national. No literary, poetic, religious work can, any more than the legend, imprint itself deeply in the spirit of a nation. Hence, in the first centuries of the middle ages, wherever a nationality grew up, there too arose a legend with its distinctive traits ; and the existence of such a legend must be one of the surest symptoms to attest the existence of a nationality in that country ; for if the legend has not the meagre advantages which men may choose to discern to what, perhaps, at this epoch of history, is called by the privileged name of literature, it has that of reflecting more directly, more faithfully, more happily, the spirit, character, and condition of nations.

We have no intention here of comparing legend with legend. To do this, one must perforce be erudite and critical. The occasion, too, would be ill chosen. It behooves us only, in order to avoid a hiatus, and a trifling one at most, to say something of the manner in which France and Germany relate the lives of the saints who came over from Ireland, and to notice, in these acts of various origins, some of the traits which belong to what may be called legendary poesy or marvellous, or the legendary picturesque.

“The illustrious Lebwin, (Livinus,) says Radbod, servant of the church of Treves, passes the sea ; the virtues are his oars, Christ the rower. . . . The pagan land, soon amazed, beheld him give up to a divine

fire the evil fruit which it had till then produced, and share its fields, assigning to these the allegorical vines, to those the pure wheat, to others the trees of the faith. . . . Then you should see the till then sterile herbs adorn themselves with brilliant flowers, &c. . . . Let us love him then devoutly, and hymn him with sweet accords. Let us sing in Latin his Breton name. . . ." Were we to gather what was written before the crusades, on the subject of, and in honor of, the saints of Ireland, we should have greatly to swell our volume. If we confine ourselves to the legend, limit ourselves especially to the German and French Acts, the field is narrow, the harvest far from rich, the gathering soon accomplished.

Columban, we have said, is not a legendary personage. Yet when his history was written, Bobbio was still an Irish house; Attala, the saint's disciple, governed it; Jonas, who was appointed to the task, was probably Irish; he was at least a pupil of Erin, imbued with her spirit. It is, moreover, hard to resist the necessity of mingling in the gravest narratives picturesque, poetic, or wondrous circumstances, the tradition of which had been sown by the divine will, or popular imagination. It was even a duty which was perhaps with difficulty escaped; it was, in fine, for the writer, the doubtless preferred portion of his labor, that on which he dwelt with most pleasure, in which he reposed with most delight. There is then a legendary side in Columban's history, too. We have carefully kept it aside in the historic account of his mission; and yet the traits added by the legend happily soften that severe and imperious countenance, so full of action and passion. We no longer behold him the uncon-

quered athlete,* coping with princes, or watchful guardian of the church, questioning popes, and boldly probing their soul. In the calm retreat he rests after the combat; under the silent trees of the wildwood, he walks noiselessly along, his countenance re-serened; he is illumined with a calmer light; from the depth of his soul emanates the happy and sympathetic mildness in which we ever behold a Kewin and a Columkill revel; and the timid innocent beasts come at his kindly call, basking in his gentle smile.

Jonas has quaintly told another scene. Columban one day, in a retired solitude, alone with his thoughts, was meditating; he was thinking surely of Theuderic, of Brunehilde, for he asked himself whether it were better for him to be exposed to the violence of men, or abandoned to the ferocity of beasts. Then covering his brow with signs of the cross, redoubling his prayers, he said in himself that it was better to suffer the fury of beasts, with no soul sullied, than to experience from men iniquities by which they lost their souls. At that very instant wolves appeared. There were wolves on the right, on the left, on all sides; they surrounded him. The saint stopped, and, rooted to the ground, repeated, in a whisper, "O God, incline unto my aid; O Lord, make haste to help me." The wolves came on; their jaws were opened upon him; they touched his garments. The saint stood straight and firm. After a little while, the wolves drew off, for, as Jonas believes, the saint had not feared. After all, were they real wolves? Were they not phantoms created by the devil? Columban himself was not sure,

* Jonas, Vita Columbani.

and Jonas apparently being no wiser, the thing remains in doubt.

St. Gall,* who lived and died in Switzerland, and threw such lustre on it, soon had his legend, and Walafriid has handed it down to us. When Columban took up his abode at Brigante, where he spent three years, Gall was intrusted with the fishing; he made nets, and so marvellous were the meshes of his net, that the monastery never wanted fish. So abundant, in fine, was his fishery, that it sufficed also for the people and pilgrims. He fished by night; once then, that of a dark and silent night, he was preparing his nets on the banks of the lake; a loud, harsh voice resounded from the mountain top; it called, and soon another voice, issuing from the depths of the waters, replied: they were the spirits of the lake and the mountain. "Come," said the mountain, "arise, and help me, that together we may drive out these foreigners." "Alas!" replied the voice of the lake, "have I not to suffer? Does not one of them pursue me to the depths of my waters? I cannot even gnaw his nets, or escape his hauls. They are fearful enemies, ever on the watch, ever with the name of God on their lips. We shall never conquer them." The man of God heard them, and arming himself with the sign of the cross, he said aloud, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I bid you leave these spots, and forbid you to injure any one here." Then he returned. Ere long the bell summoned the brethren into the church, and even before they began to chant the psalms, they heard the wild and terrible cries of the evil spirits flying away over the mountain tops.

* Walafriid Strabo, Vita S. Galli.

The legend of Magnoald* and that of Gall have a singular resemblance; they may be said to form but one; and it is, moreover, easy to see that the master and the disciple, after a common life, have no history apart from each other. The pages of Walafrid almost reproduced the more ancient accounts of Theodore, differing only in details, sometimes in the character. In Theodore, too, the evil spirits speak; but the scene has not the Germanic imprint which stamps the narrative of Walafrid, two centuries later. For it must be remarked that it was not in France that Walafrid gathered up and arranged these traditions; he wrote at Fulda, under the genius of Germany. Theodore wrote in Switzerland, soon after the death of the two saints whose scholar he was; and it would seem as if the German genius had not then yet had time to learn their history, to relate it after its own fashion; or else we may believe that Switzerland, then half French, half German, had the neutral spirit and hybrid taste of transition peoples and intermediate literatures.

This Helvetic legend is in itself, in fact, all legends; it seems, at least, as though they had wished to reproduce there together the forms that legendary narratives most generally take. Devils, animals, monsters, all take part. The devils are merry; they pun, and console themselves, or revenge themselves on Gall and Magnoald by jests and puns; the name Gall signifies, in Latin, a Gaul, or a cock. "What shall we do here?" cries one. "Here is a new cock, and he is worse than the first. He crows too loud; he will force us to go." The birds are tired of eating; this is not the miracle;

* Theodore, Vita Magnoald, (Messingham.)

they stop to be taken, and the feathery band takes the liberty of flying off only when the saint has made his choice among them. Bears are important personages, as is natural in Switzerland; it was one of them that revealed to Magnoald the iron mines of Suiting. The story is this.

Magnoald was in the wood, felling trees; a bear came trotting along. They were more numerous there than wolves in the Vosges; the saint had seen some already, and they had shared in peace the fruits on which, like them, he lived. These powerful beasts had even become the servants of the holy solitaries; they helped them to build their monastery, carrying the largest stones, and cutting down the trees. This one then came up to Magnoald, and with great gentleness, says Theodore, and signs of intelligence, scratching the earth at the foot of a pine tree, gave him to understand that there was abundance of iron under the tree. When he had scratched for a long time the tree fell, and the iron appeared under its roots. The saint and the bear went for Liuto, told him to take his axe, and all his tools, and intrusted him to the new guide. "Thou wilt guide him," said he to the bear, "to the spot that the Lord has shown us; but take care lest any other animal harm him." The bear trotted on ahead, clearing the way, and brought him back with like fidelity.

While the Germanic tribes of the Upper Rhine heard these first monastic glories, where traditions peculiar to the mountains, and German fantasy, blend already with exotic ideas, the history of another Irishman was popularized a little lower down in the country of the Rhine and the Moselle: and the irrefragable sign of

this popularity is here, too, the national stamp with which the legend is impressed. What we relate took place at Seckingen. There Fridolin, after living and teaching long years at Poitiers, near the tomb of St. Hilary, came to settle and to die. Among those whose piety had contributed to the foundation and endowment of his monastery, were two brothers, Ursus and Landolph. Ursus died, and Landolph, left alone, took back from the monastery his own donation, denied that made by his brother, declared that he resumed all.* Fridolin complained to the landgrave, and both parties were cited to his tribunal of Ganwilre. Then, says the legend, the saint went to the tomb of Ursus, called him, and Ursus rose at his call. The saint took him by the hand, and both walked together the distance of six miles to Ganwilre, where Landolph awaited them with many enemies of the Irish saint. But when Fridolin appeared at the feet of the judge, with his awful witness, the spectators shuddered. Ursus, turning to Landolph, said, "Why, brother, hast thou robbed my soul by stealing property that was mine?" "O brother," replied Landolph, "I restore thee thy share, and mine too. I give it all to the monastery of Seckingen." Fridolin then bore home the corpse to which he had for a moment restored life, and when the tomb was closed, four verses were engraved upon it, attesting to future generations the strange and menacing story.

France, too, drew up her marvellous stories of Irish saints, less sombre and less sinister, however. Fursey had founded Lagny; but good Duke Haymo had promised to found one monastery more,† and he had not ful-

* Balthar, Vita Fridolin.

† Fursei Miracula, (Mabillon.)

filled his promise. Meanwhile Fursey died, and the duke was in ignorance of the event. But as he was going to sit down, he suddenly beheld blessed Fursey coming, with two deacons behind him. All three bore lighted tapers ; they set them silently on the table, and disappeared. Haymo, greatly troubled, cried out to those around him, "And do you not behold the glory that I see?" But it was not revealed to their eyes. And the duke resumed, sadly, "Now I know that the saint has left this world ; let us go and bury him."

There was, says Gregory of Tours,* on the limit of the country, a mound covered with brambles, ivy, and wild vines, so that no one could or durst penetrate through it. For it was said that of old two holy virgins had dwelt there. On the eves of holidays, a bright light shone there, a taper of marvellous whiteness, whose flame lighted up all far and near. One day, the virgins appeared to an inhabitant of the place ; they complained of the oblivion in which they were left, of the rain, the wind, and all the inclemencies of the season, that assailed and profaned their uncovered tomb.

Euphronius then governed the church of Tours. The complaint of these gentle and forsaken foreigners was heard ; for they were foreign maidens, natives of Ireland. They appeared also to Euphronius, pressing him with touching words to protect what was yet left of their mortal frame ; and the holy bishop preserved a pious remembrance of their visits. They were called Maura and Britta—harmonious names ; one was larger than the other, as he related, although they were equal in merit ; but both were whiter than the snow. They

* De. Glor. conf.

deserved a better hospitality, a surer and less savage shelter, than a roof of leaves and thorns. The ivy and vine, which had long been their only protectors, made way for an oratory ; the virgins no longer came to burn on their own tomb the divine and perfumed wax of the miraculous torch ; but the church lit up her tapers there, there exhaled her incense, and poured forth her holy water and her prayers.

These stories are more pleasing ; they spring from the smiling genius and the temperate sky of the provinces, so truly called the Garden of France.

We must add these stories to the testimonies which we elsewhere adduce : they combine to show what a remembrance foreign lands preserved of their Irish guests. But the pure life, the sympathetic and benevolent character, the evangelic soul of these holy men left to the nations that had welcomed them not only poetic and marvellous inspirations, they brought, too, their national traditions of their own isle. They taught their German or French disciples the legend of their church, and also all that their Fileas told of the remote origin and early ages of the Heberians. Curious fact ! it is in the life of an Irish saint, written at Metz, in the tenth or early part of the eleventh century, that we find these traditions. We met them, it will be remembered, in the book of the Briton Nennius, but we may seek traces of them in vain in the Irish Acts. According to Mabillon, Ousmann or Reimann must have been the author of the Life of Kaddroe ; he must have been a disciple of the saint, and heard from his lips the story which he subsequently made his prologue. According to Colgan, the life in question is by some nameless author who never saw Kaddroe, but only his disciples.

Under the last hypothesis, the presence, the persistence of the national traditions of Ireland among the German monks of Lorraine would be a still more interesting and remarkable fact.

This is not the spot to follow up a narrative that leads us back to the first pages of this book, to the preambles of our history. The itinerary of the Scoto-Milesians, moreover, and their voyages, as traced and related by the monk of Lorraine,* would neither be agreeable nor instructive. It is a pilgrimage starting on the banks of the Pactolus, pursued across the *Ægean* Sea, the Ionian and the Adriatic Gulf, to be lost finally in the Ionian Sea and Gulf of Lyons; then, escaping by the Straits of Gades, the emigrants entered the Atlantic, for a moment passed their destination, and were borne to the shores of Thule, whence they returned, to touch at last on the shores of Ierne or Ireland. At that time, according to the same historian, Julius Cæsar had just completed the conquest of Gaul, and Pompey the Great ruled at Rome. It will be seen that on this point the author is not in harmony with attested traditions,† or that more probably he forgot his dates.

These traits suffice to show the vestiges left by the Irish in foreign legends. When we think of the great number of those who for five centuries mingled in the churches and tribes of the continent, if the wonder is that the traces are not more numerous, it must be remembered that we have left aside the annals of history, and to history almost exclusively belong the men who left Ireland to instruct the churches or evangelize the

* Vita Kaddroe, (Colgan.)

† McGeoghegan, History of Ireland.

nations. Every people, on the other hand, by virtue of the national spirit that it bears instinctively in all things, has for its own saints an easier admiration, a more ready cultus, a more fruitful imagination, and a more faithful memory. The most insignificant monastery has, if possible, its saints and its legend ; their virtue and their relics are its glory, and often, too, its treasure ; and the faithful, with a piety not unmixed with pride and sympathy, adopt, exalt, and transmit, embellished, of course, the sanctity and miracles of him who has honored the country. Less lovingly is kept alive the remembrance of a stranger, cordial and respectful as may have been the hospitality he received. A scanty few are kept alive in men's minds, the more illustrious ones, or those whose renown has been maintained or restored by some happy circumstance.

CHAPTER XXIX.

OBSERVATION ON THE IRISH LEGEND.

WE know now how the legend has related the history of the first ages of Christian Ireland. We can judge Ireland, and especially can we judge the legend ; and if this book is a reduced, but clear and faithful image of the whole legend, the judgment is an easy one.

Every legend is, or aims to be, poetic ; every legend loves and seeks the marvellous ; every legend, in its conceptions, be they simple, quaint, or imperfect, attains or pursues an ideal type ; how these inspirations and these instincts are found in the lives of the Irish saints, the reader has seen ; he can appreciate, too, what graces, imagination, mystic poesy, and sanctity, the popular and monastic genius of Ireland has infused into the narrative.

We have said that the Irish legend is profoundly national. It is so in the character of its saints, in their sentiments, their actions, their spirit, their discipline ; it is so by the character of its stories, their form and style, by the wonders which it prefers, by the tendencies it reveals. This originality is manifest, even without comparison. Little as one may know of other legends, it is more striking still.

When we read the legend, when we pass through these long galleries, where the monks have ranged the portraits of those whom the church honors, all these

countenances, transformed by sanctity, would seem, at first sight, to be necessarily alike. Each of them representing the Christian ideal, it seems as though the same traits should be every where reproduced, and that purity, benignity, quiet, austerity, fortitude, and asceticism, mingled in almost unvarying proportions, should be the immutable character of these evangelical physiognomies.

We find some difficulty in varying, even in imagination, the countenances of angels. It may at once be asked how human individualities, so easily distinguished in the inexhaustible diversity of present imperfection, will be capable of distinction in the unity of ideal perfection, which apparently the benefit of resurrection will confer on them. Yet the personages of the legend have their distinctive character and physiognomy. Patrick, Columkill, Mochoedoc, Keiwin, Columban, &c., are figures that resemble each other, yet differ. In the Irish legend, particularly, diversity is visible, and the features of the saints are as different as the stories which make up their history.

The women, mingling in the ranks of the three orders, mingling especially in the general life of the church and of the saints, add to this already manifold variety. Bridget is of course remembered. Call to mind, too, Meda, Rethna, Lassara, Fanchea, the pupils, friends, teachers even, of Brendan, Colman, Kiaran, Enda; recall these severe and fond maternities, these humble or protective friendships, that grace, ever pure yet ever tender, that sweet and charming sanctity, in fine, which seduced, and at the same time reassured, the most austere souls. We have found the trace, and, so to say, the perfume, in some pages of the legend, where

the daughters of Ireland seem to have left, with their amiable virtues and profound sensibility, something of their poetic imagination and smiling fancy. They figure in the three orders; they have also their place in the thaumaturgic triad, in that glorious trinity that crowns the Irish calendar. Patrick there represents the active power, the exterior spirit, the apostolic virtues of the church; Columbkille, the interior beatitude, the mystic life, the illuminated recollection of the cloisters; Bridget, the graceful perfections, the pure and touching tenderness, the penetrating and sympathetic charm of woman, idealized by sanctity. It suffices thus to show some of the characteristics of the Irish legend; the reader will complete them without difficulty.

There is, however, one observation on which we wish to dwell.

The triad of which we spoke does not merely crown the Irish calendar; it comprises it, and is its brilliant symbol. The triad is entirely monastic; the calendar is also entirely monastic, at least entirely ecclesiastical. Read these long lists: all the names belong to the monastery or the church. Where is laical sanctity? Either it fails or is excluded; but it evidently fails.

The church institutes the saints whom the people honor with her. When she leans to take near her, to choose, in her own bosom, those who are worthy above all, of these high honors, she but obeys a quite natural impulse. The church teaches sanctity; her mission is to furnish at once lesson and model; that she finds in herself the most striking lessons and most perfect models, in this there is nothing improbable; and if she proposes them in preference to the imitation of the faithful, she conforms to their interests and her strict duty.

It was not so in the first ages of Christianity ; but this depended on circumstances. It was the time of persecutions, confessors, and martyrs ; the martyr beatified, the confession sanctified ; all, ecclesiastics and laics, might suffer or die for their faith. The crown was the reward of the combat and the sign of victory. The martyrs bore it to heaven ; the confessors bore it in this world — a difficult struggle indeed, a glorious triumph, a palm valiantly conquered, yet less meritorious, perhaps, than the long trial of life. Happy he whose body has been overcome by the executioners, and whose soul has soared to heaven ; he was sure alike of glory and sanctity. How many of the survivors preserved their crown intact ? The church has mournfully told us in her annals ; more than once was she afflicted, troubled, scandalized sometimes, by those whose heroism had constituted her consolation and her pride ; and the History of the Confessors is one of the books where we may learn the secret and measure of human strength and human weakness.

When the church was at peace, heaven was no longer taken by violence ; men were no longer declared saints for one proof of courage, one remarkable action ; it required a whole life full of spotless virtues. This persevering perfection, difficult every where, was less so in the church and in the depths of the cloister ; thither went those who mused on it ; there many found it, perhaps, who never sought it. In fact, when barbarians came with disorder, violence, and fearful chaos, in which a new unorganized state of society fermented, men fled to places of asylum. There — that is to say, in the holy places — gathered almost all those alarmed souls, timid or tender souls, enamoured of good or of peace,

souls fitted for the evangelical virtues. Sanctity found itself then in the church and cloister, rarely elsewhere, more frequently too in the cloister than in the church, because the monks were more removed than the priests from the violent and corrupt lay society of the day. Can we wonder then that the saints of the middle ages wore the monk's or priest's gown, that Religion honored scarcely any but those devoted to her?

The fact is general; it is reproduced in all martyrologies; but it is most striking of all in that of Ireland. The exceptions disappear; the exclusion is absolute. Nor is it merely the calendar that is silent as to the virtues of the laity; the whole legend is so. From good King Connall, neither before Guarius nor after, is there a prince who wears the heart of a monk under his warrior's harness. We do not find in Ireland, as in other lands, pious nobles the protectors, friends, companions even, of the saints, men whose loyal and religious countenances look so well in the legend; none of those Christian women, who become the devoted servants, the humble benefactresses, of the men of God. Nowhere, in a word, do we find the faithful beside the priest, imitation near the model, laical virtue with ecclesiastical sanctity.

This hiatus is a sad one. The sanctity of the church and the cloister is an ideal, mystical one; it has its peculiar character, its particular laws, by the very fact that the ecclesiastical profession is a profession apart. The duties, conditions, qualities of sanctity in the world, are always a little different. Is it good for souls engaged in the sentiments, interests, labors, of the family, society, and world, to have before their eyes models that they may imitate more closely, more easily, and

perhaps with a secret preference. The Roman church divined this preference when it inscribed on its martyrology so many men who had lived in the world; when with attentive care, which it would be miserably wrong to treat as puerile, it found for every class, every rank, every trade, patrons who suited them, and were theirs by origin; it satisfied not only a sentiment of human vanity, — it showed regard for certain natural proprieties, and facilitated the salvation of souls. Must one be a monk to be a saint? Is sanctity supererogatory or unnecessary for him who is not a monk? Or must he, to save his soul, fly from the world? Doubtless none of these. No more than any other church, did or could the Irish church believe it.

Why, then, this exclusion? Why, in this long history, where we find what Christian virtues a country can see and practise in six centuries, is there not one lay virtue revealed and honored? not a man, not a woman, of all that great multitude, comes forth pointed out to the respect and sympathy of the faithful? Or, rather, where is the Irish people? One might say that the church stands alone.

When we admit that in Ireland, where monastic institutions, and especially monastic sentiments, developed so energetically, the spirit of the church was also more absolute and more exclusive, this would be but an insufficient and totally hypothetical explanation. We must seek another.

The churches in the first centuries of the middle age were the sole depositories of the moral principles whence modern society was to rise. They were to act on the nations, wrest them from barbarism, prepare them for civilization. Nowhere did this power remain impotent

where exercised ; it was every where fruitful. Nowhere has it been replaced by another. To the clergy exclusively and entirely belongs this sacred mission of preservation and initiation. Nowhere, in fine, it seems, has the action of the church been more free, more efficacious, more sovereign, than amid those tribes of Ireland, prompt in faith, faithful in doctrine, firm in obedience, respectful for religion, and finally so fruitful in monastic and priestly virtues, in apostolic works, in Christian devotedness.

But to act on society, we must not keep aloof from it. To form a man is a difficult thing. What is it then to form a whole people ? To change to civilized nations the hordes of barbarians whom Providence confided to the care of the churches, what pains, what time, what assiduity, what zeal ! It had to intervene ever, every where, in every thing, in politic, public, and private life, in laws, in manners, in conscience. The master was not permitted to lose sight of his disciple ; he had to mingle his own life with the latter's, be present at his actions, words, and thoughts. Thus, aided by centuries, advanced painfully the education of modern nations. Their education has advanced more rapidly where the preceptors were more vigilant, active, and assiduous. The progress of the one is in direct proportion to the zeal of the other.

Hence, too, the history of the churches of the middle age is, in general, so closely blended with the history of nations. Hence we commonly find, even in the legends, this anecdotic and marvellous history of the saints, the traces of their action on the men and the events of their country ; hence, in the accounts of the cloister and solitude, there is a part for secular life, a place for lay virtue.

These expressive signs of the commerce and solidarity that unites each church with its people, the saints with the profane, we find in the first pages of the Irish legend. Why do we never see it afterwards appear? Did the Irish church separate from the people? After having evangelized and baptized it, did it abandon Ireland to itself? One would think so, to see the lists of its saints, to read the narratives of its legend. We could thus explain why the nation is absent, why the church stands alone. If the two societies lived apart, why do we find the names and acts that belong to the one appearing in the history or the catalogues of the other?

But such a divorce supposes deep-rooted dissimilitude, or rather produces it. To live so near, yet severed, would require to have nothing in common. But if lay society had nothing in common with the church, what was lay society?

In other terms, what was the actual influence exercised by the church on the Irish nation? Thus reappears, at the close of this history, the question which we had put or felt at its commencement. The moment has come to examine and solve it. The examination shall be rapid, the response summary.

If we find that the Irish church acted feebly on the people that surrounded it, that the Irish nation remained gross, almost savage, in mind, manners, institutions, and laws, this very fact will prove that there was really between it and its church, an unhappy separation. We will at the same time understand how, in the Irish legend, men belonging to the world appear so rarely, and never take the narrow or secondary place that they occupy in other legends. We will be enabled to ex-

plain how the Irish people profited so little by the active, incessant, fruitful labor going on in its church.

A last reflection will then naturally occur to the mind : how explain an inveterate separation so fatal to the people ? Was the church guilty ? Is it excusable ? Must the whole responsibility rest on her ? To answer these questions would be to rewrite the whole history of Ireland ; we will put them, nor answer. To decide or discuss them, we have not, moreover, the necessary authority.

Ireland, which did so much for other lands, did perhaps less for its own ; it did not entirely accomplish the task assigned to it. But it is a little church, and among the greatest are there many that ever did more ? What church pursued its work unwearied, unceasingly, and had completed it by the twelfth century ? For till the twelfth century only is the Irish church responsible, and from that period England must answer. What church, in fine, even in our days, has completed its task, realized its ideal, or even approached it ? To do good, all good, is not in the power of men or human institutions, be they even of divine origin ; man, too, is imperfect, yet he is of divine institution. To do good, all possible duty—here is the duty : the Irish church does good, much good ; it does it with ardor, heroism, perseverance ; and if it has forgotten itself, or been exhausted for others, those on whom she lavishes her power would perhaps have neither the right nor courage to reproach it with weakness.

We may then admit it. In the time of St. Patrick and his first successors, Ireland was evangelized with order, and rapidly converted ; then the zeal spread

abroad ; from the very depth of its monasteries and schools, the Irish church had its eyes turned and fixed on foreign shores. Its work in Ireland was suspended, and remained unaccomplished. The people remained Christian, but of the goods of religion it gathered faith alone. Hence doubtless it was better, but in sentiment.

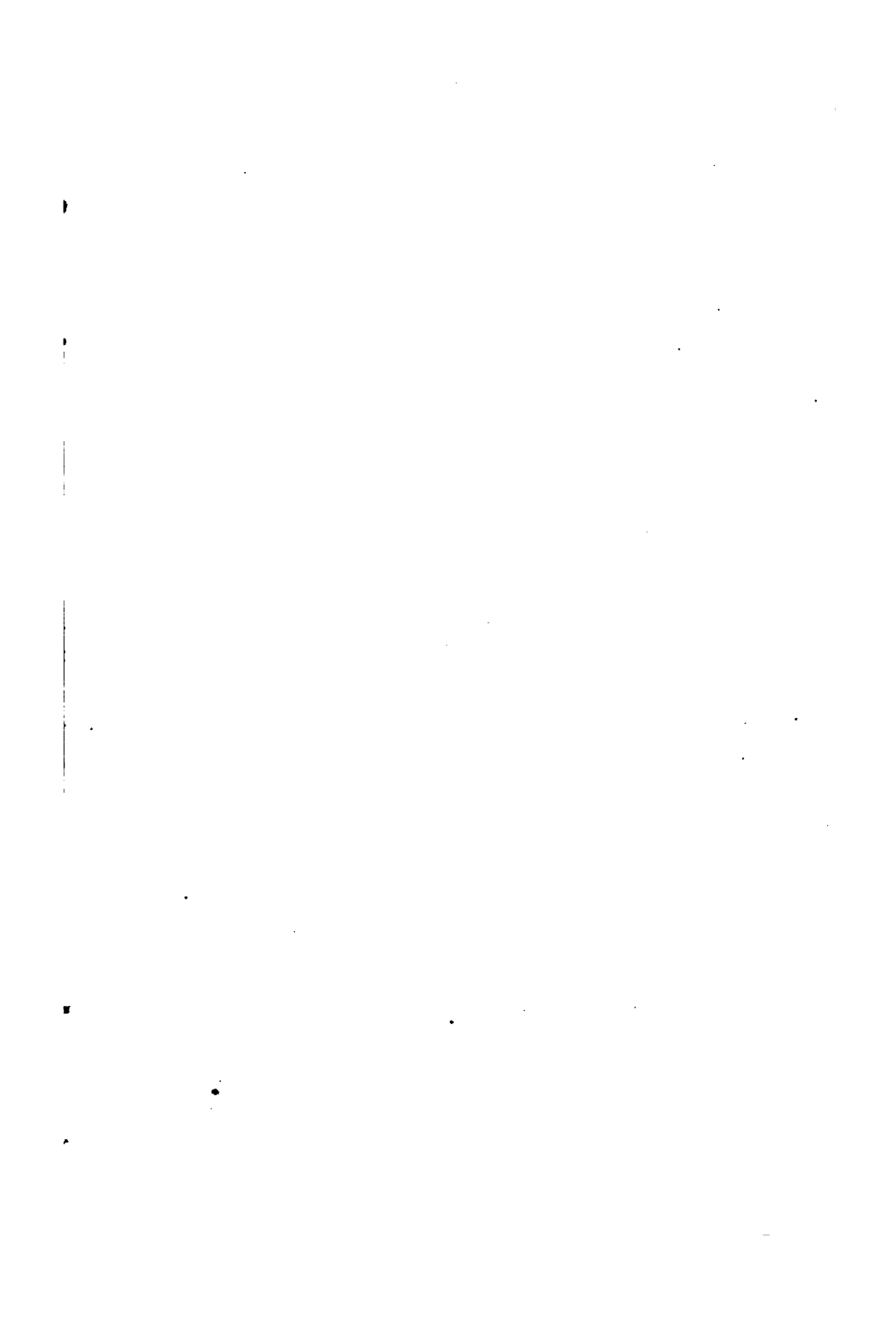
The bishops did not continue against princes the apostolic struggle which the saints of the first order, that is to say, of the first century, so courageously undertook. They did nought to ameliorate the laws, reform the institutions that filled the country with trouble and woe, and at last gave it up to foreign bondage. The people had faith to console them ; therein less unhappy perhaps, but therein only.

With faith to console her, there still remained her imagination. It kept the memory of her saints, especially of those of the first age ; these it had seen ; they had remained in Ireland ; they had thought of Ireland ; it had profited by their virtues, their zeal, and their miracles. Their time remained in her writings and in her memory, the golden age of her history. Amid her woes, she thought what the ancient church would have done to relieve them. Hence that inexhaustible legend, full of the beneficence of some, of the gratitude of others, and the quaint stories, the simple and popular miracles, that are repeated, untiringly multiplied, and that we have been unable to repeat ourselves, so popular, quaint, and simple are they.

Hence, too, perhaps all the poetry of the legend, if indeed it will be admitted that this Irish legend is not without some poesy. When nations are happy, they do not dream of supernatural benefactors ; golden stories are invented in iron ages ; and the brilliant narratives,

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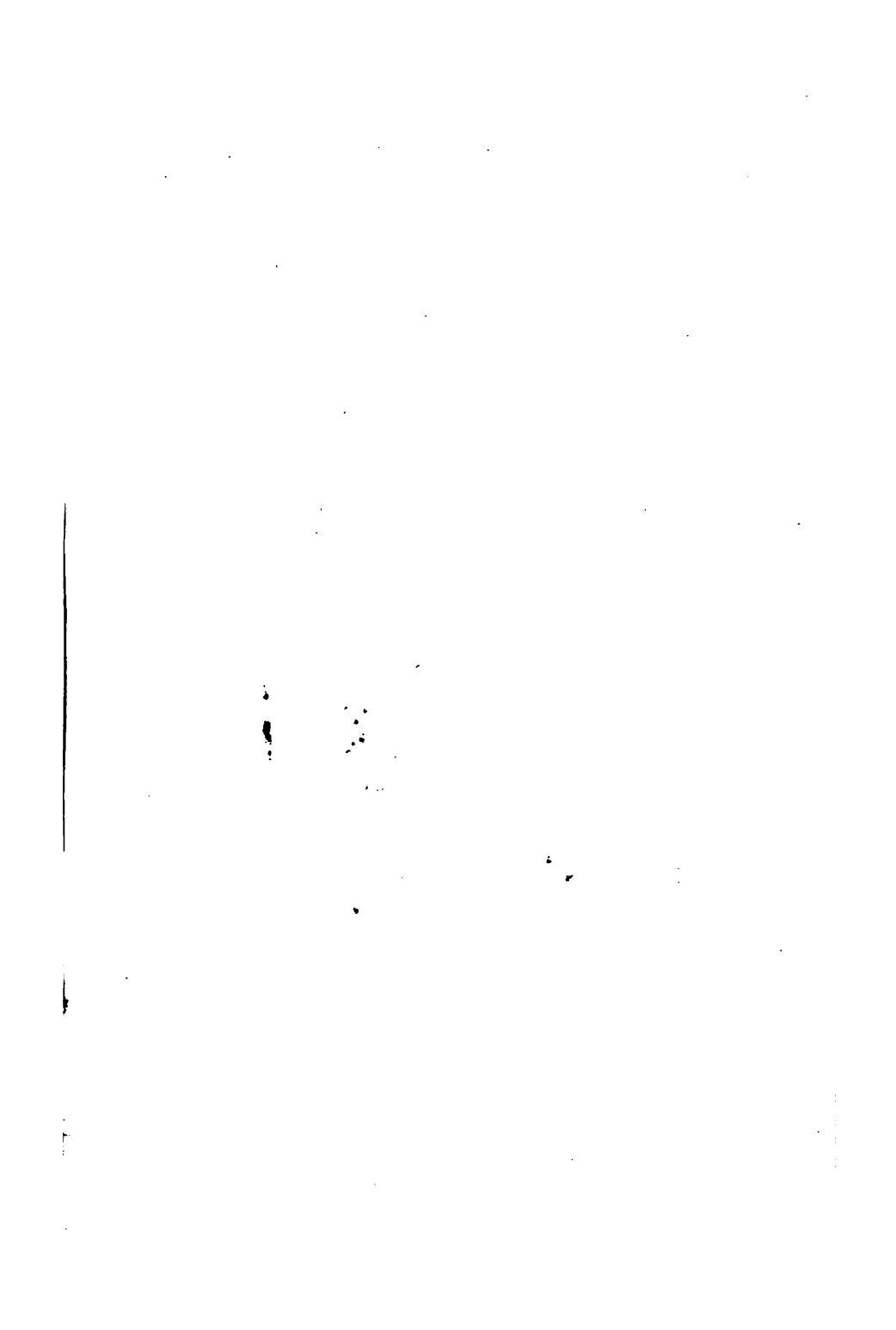
the marvellous and ingenuous imaginations, which amuse the generations of better times, spring from the misery of past generations ; they have alleviated their sufferings, sweetened, sometimes at least, the bitterness of their thoughts. Under the poetic history of the saints, there is often the sad history of nations ; and when in imagination we visit Ireland, visit the cabins where the legend was related, its most beneficent miracles, its most consoling stories, its most gladsome conceptions, have something indescribably touching and melancholy ; they are listened to with more sympathy and more indulgence.

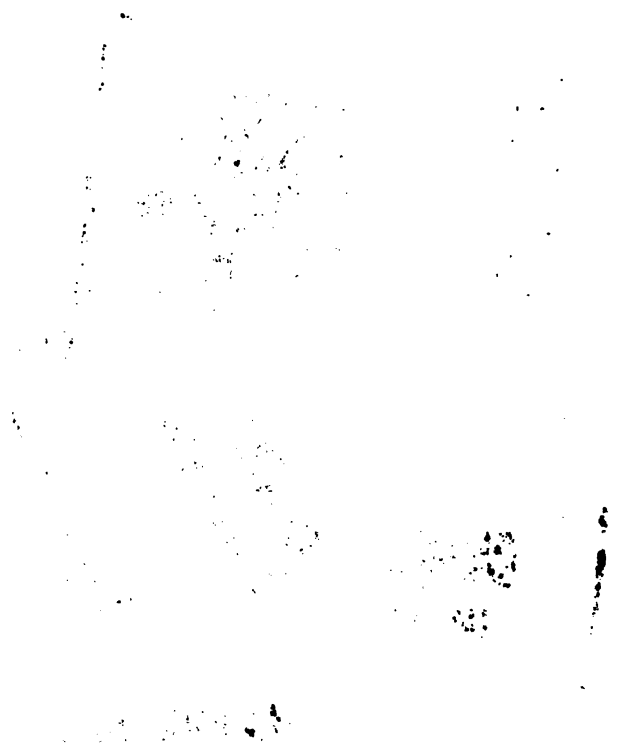


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